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The Hill of Visions

And Other Poems

The Hill of Visions

And Other Poems

By

John Harrington Lenane



London

Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd.

1899

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATION
1899.

Preface.

THE poems composing this volume are selected from a number written during the last nine years —years of effort and struggle in a far-away land.

On making his bow to the reading world, the Author hopes that his work will merit appreciation —he begs no favour.

J. H. L.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA,
January 1899.

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Contents

	PAGE
THE PAST (from an Unfinished Epic)	I
ASPASIA	12
YOUNG ROMANCE	21
THE HILL OF VISIONS (from an Unfinished Epic)	43
THE KNIGHTS OF RHAMA	66
MYRLIN	73
SONNETS—	
To a Bird in its Cage	84
A Man	85
Opposite Views	86
Of the Thought is born the Word	87
Thought	88
To a Mountain	89
THE WALL OF SABRON (a Satire)	90

The Past

(From an Unfinished Epic)

AND travelling on a far and lonely way
Amidst the ruins of imperial pomp,
Temples and tombs, and slave-built pyramids,
Strange battlemented cities, mounds and cairns ;
Where Silence had a voice, and Solitude
Companionship ; where Sympathy's warm heart
Throbbled in a mute despair ; where doubting Reason,
Helpless against herself, drew inference sad—
Viewing the relics of historic pride
Now lone, and desolate, and lost. Then for
Awhile I left my knowledgable friend,
And mused alone on destiny of things—
How life fades into death, how glory fleets
With meteor light, how beauty smiles and pales
Into a nothingness.

I passed into
A solitude, and as the setting sun
Showed me the wrinkles on the face of Earth,
I felt the gloomy grandeur of the past,

Vastness and change, and saw where Nature strove
Against herself : a battle-field and death-bed,
The shattered forces of aggressive life,
The pomp and majesty of ruin. Suddenly
A subterranean thunder rumbled loud, and Earth
Convulsed with all the torments of the damned,
As with the horror of confounding shocks
A fissure opened in her ancient breast,
And gradually widened till a gulph
Revealed itself in all its frightful vastness.
Lo, I approached its brink, and looking down
The dizzy depths, I found the strata of
Earth's thousand periods cleft asunder : each
Showing its various sub-divisions, rocks
And clays—memorials of continents
And oceans gone, embosoming still their own
Peculiar fossils—piled alternately
Above each other, an eternal grave
Where a thin sedimentary petrification,
If mortal eye could read, perhaps contained
The record of a hundred thousand years.
Right well might Reason shrink, appalled to feel
The vast antiquity of time.—Deep down
I saw the fiery soul of Earth glow through
The inorganic rock ; now reddening it
To lava, now blackening out and rushing far—
Thundering its tribulations wildly through

The Past

3

Remotest caverns of its prison and
Its home. Lo, as I watched, I suddenly
Became full conscious that the mighty depths
Were being obscured by a peculiar mist
That issued from the various strata in
The awful walls. The mist fast deepening, soon
Resolved itself into the figure of
One who sublimely felt her majesty,
Mighty amongst divinities imperial,
Yet sad with an unutterable decay.
Her robe was mildewed, dust was on her head,
Her wand was mouldering, but her pensive eye
Burned with the knowledge of all time departed.
With graceful motion she ascended to
The upper air ; and as she left its shade,
The chasm with thunderous rumbling heavily closed
Its gaping mouth, and left her hovering o'er
The world ; and I, a mortal, stood alone
Facing the eternal Past.

With voice that rang
Like clarion through the universe, the Spirit
Invoked the dominant Energies of Nature,
And all, though in remotest confines, paused
To listen.

Hail ye powers eternal ! ye
That are of sovereign dominion ! none
But I can give you worthy greeting ; for

With you I live coevally—your peer,
The chronicler of all your dead creations,
The monitress of an eternity
Unborn. A perished galaxy of worlds
Imagined they had seen the birth of me
Whose yesterday had no beginning, whose
To-morrow never comes. Extinguished suns,
Dwindled to planets, feel rash mortals on
Their dusty crumbling surfaces record
A trivial round of fleeting vanities,
Deeming they give *me* fame. Child of profounds,
Infinities of space and time, I range
Amid a cataclysm of elements
In scenes of stormy birth, progressive power,
Eclipse, destruction, change. This living hour,
Succumbing, feels the grey pervading Past—
Whose very silence is an eloquence
Sounding above the voice of Nature and
The universal hum. To sad-faced mortals
Earth proves she is a tomb colossal, where
No grain of dust but once with life was instinct,
And pulsed through joy and sorrow into death.
My strength feeds on all that have had existence,
That flourished and that fell, that burned and bloomed,
That moved and felt, the beauty and the horror,
The wonder and the glory, light and love,
The ruin, loss and devastation of

A million million years. In these sad rocks,
These deepening silts and heaps of wind-blown dust,
A chapter of my fame is written in
Imperishable lines, that ever prove
That everything now dead is waiting an
Inevitable resurrection ; for
The soul of Nature sleeps, it never dies.
Enjoined by Him, the great Creator who
Enshrouds Himself in awful mystery,
Lo, time shall see the dormant energies
Awaken, and the wilderness of rock
And bone-strewn sand again, and yet again,
Breathe forth new being, till the countenance
Of Nature shall grow glad and dazzle with
Excess of loveliness. For even as
The years, the ages have their seasons, their
Alternate barrenness and efflorescence.
And so the sweet and blushing princess Spring,
Rescued from Winter's frozen wizardry
By her proud sire the Sun, wanders still forth,
Raimented in a sweet bewilderment
Of buds and brown just breaking into green.
As death is but a transitory sleep,
A change and an oblivion, all these rocks
And clays down to the fundamental stratum
Shall be reincarnated ; and the flora
And fauna of a thousand periods

Shall surely waken from the beds of death.
Forests shall burst out of their iron prisons,
And beat the cyclone with a myriad arms ;
These rocks shall once again be living flesh,
Clothing aspiring minds or brutish instincts ;
Or animate with scaly iridescence,
Shall flash through wonders of the new-made deep ;
Or shall mount up in feathered symmetry,
Through echo-haunted caverns of the air,
Singing a carol to the sun. So Truth
Immutably presides, and Nature takes
Her destined course, as in the primal hour
When through the darkness of the silent void
The Genius of Creation dashed along,
Scattering with an imperial hand the stars—
Those myriad worlds that were eternally
To glitter in the light of His omnipotence,
Like glorious grains of dust suspended far
And wide in an immensity of space,
That, ever boundless, baffles man's conjecture,
And humbles Reason from her haughty throne.

The Spirit ceased, and for awhile in mood
Contemplative surveyed the heavens ; then to
The Earth she turned, and seeing me all silence,
Again she spoke : O mortal, thou hast heard
My words prophetic of the future and

The Past

7

Its sentient progress ; but to thee the Past
Shall be a greater miracle. Thou shalt
See Earth renew her youth and infancy,
And an eternity stop in its course
And backward roll to God.

And raising high
Her wand, the Spirit made a mystic sign
Above the Earth ; then from the scene enchanted
She softly floated on the evening wind,
A pallid exhalation that grew less,
And in the sunshine died.

And I saw Nature,
As represented corporally in Earth,
Unlive herself and swiftly undergo
A mighty metamorphosis, as in
Due order, one by one, Earth's thousand strata
Wakened again with earlier forms of life,
That gradually degenerated as
Ocean submerged the land ; till there returned
The time when life was not, when Earth too in
A cataclysm of fire dissolved and passed
Into the primal element whence all
Existence came.

Obedient to the Spell,
The surface of the Earth sprang into life ;
As in the panoply of modern nations
The countless dead of yesterday arose,

Replayed their parts back into infancy,
From infancy to nothing, making way
For quick returning generations of
Their ancestry. As high-browed Knowledge saw
Her talents lessen, the medieval ages
Awoke to life in all their glittering pomp
And savage courtesy ; and retrograded,
Till 'mid a wide-extending barbarism,
The mighty nations of antiquity
Successively relived their lives, with all
Their conquests, crimes and tyrannies, their arts
And mysticisms. So Time retraced his steps
Till disenthroned, unsceptred Civilization
Rolled up her magic scroll, and vanished from
The scene. Expelling from his cave the brute,
Primeval man with rude stone weapons armed,
Hunting and hunted, gradually forgot
His higher faculties, till fierce dumb apes
Clumsily climbed in their arboreous haunts,
Dead to the inspiring dreams of man and all
Divinities of thought. Now continents
Suffered displacement of their levels ; and
From mountain regions and from polar plains
The snow fast melted and evaporated,
Till myriads of mighty animal forms
Rose out their icy graves, and sought a covert
In forests blossoming and musical ;

The Past

9

Or browsed on green savannas glistening with
Pellucid streams. And dread carnivorous beasts,
Fast growing in ferocity and size,
Left jungles dense and wandered into regions
Familiar once, to glut themselves with slaughter.
'Mid flame and thunder of volcanic storms,
Now the majestic mountain ranges sank
Into Earth's bosom ; and the noble rivers,
Dwindling to brooks, flowed sluggishly
Into a warm fresh-water ocean. One by one
The sweet flowers lost their loveliness, and died
Back into common weeds. The forest trees
Deteriorated too, and sank abased
In nature and in name. And now the birds,
Reft of ærial pride and glittering raiment,
Fluttering to earth, assumed a bat-like being,
And perished into songless nothing. Still
Upheavals and submersions changed the face
Of continents on which huge saurians
Fiercely contested for supremacy.
As turret pinnacles of vanishing lands
Dotted the widening archipelagoes,
And the vast chalk-beds, melting into life
Molluskan, 'mid the waters passed into
Their germs original, lo, step by step,
And stage by stage, as though the boughs returned
Into the parent trunk, mammalian life

Grew fewer in its forms and merged itself
Again in ancestry reptilian. Now
The ocean swarmed with predatory monsters
Fierce battling with each other, dwindling from
Existence as another group of ages,
Wakening to the ardent influence of
A humid atmosphere the black-dead beds
Of coal, evolved broad-stretching, dismal marshes,
And forests vast of conifers and tree-ferns.
But these too vanished ; and the mountain limestone,
In ponderous beds subsiding in the waters,
Resumed past loveliness ; and, waning, soon
Was lost amongst things that existed not.
Now as the atmosphere grew murkier, 'mid
The deepening darkness Earth's primeval fishes
Broke from their stony prison, filled again
With instincts young ; yet giving place to swarms
Of strange crustaceans that in turn made way
For lowly protozoans ; these full soon
Dwindled to protoplasmic cells, and life
Faintly returned to death in quietness of
Silurian seas. As darkness reigned supreme,
Unknown, unmourned, the last land was submerged,
And on and on the lonely waters swept,
Hurling their strength against themselves in an
Almighty uselessness. Now storms burst forth
And lightnings flashed afar, and steam and flame

The Past

11

Shot through the deep ; and soon all that was water
Boiled hissingly, waging vain war against
All-conquering fire, and passing back into
Its primal gases till, as though it were
In rage at ocean's sad annihilation,
The molten globe with thunders and explosions,
Dashed into space ; far scattering desolation,
And deluging the heavens with fire till it
Too was amongst the perished, not the lost ;
For a vast cloud of incandescent vapour
Retained to the last atom all that had
Been once the planet, Earth. I, too, was reft
Of corporal being—had dissolved into
The glowing gas ; yet felt myself a Soul,
A consciousness that permeated that
Measureless cloud ; and all that I had known
Or loved, or feared, were with me there combined,
Returning through Eternity attracted
By some superior Power that burned afar,—
When, lo, a voice rang through the gulphs, and I,
Answering the summons, in an instant felt
The scattered elements of my former self
Into an individual entity
Condense ; and the enchantment vanishing,
I found myself still in the living world.
The day was past, and from a lonely highland,
Afar I saw a city in the night
Wearing a coronal of stars.

Aspasia

SHE journeys her downward gradation,
A woman—yet woman no more ;
A sequel to pleasant temptation,
A wretch with a past to deplore.
And now from the bitterest chalice
Her drinking may never delay,
While feared as a serpent whose malice
Contaminates all in its way.

Ah, once in her innocent beauty
She was the sweet boast of a home,
Nor dreamt that a failure in duty
Would cause her to friendlessly roam.
Her father the while he protected
Rejoiced at her budding of grace ;
And the smile of a mother reflected
The pleasure that beamed on his face.


For industry, truth, and discretion,
Her elders commended her ways,
Which early presaged a completion
Of honoured and matronly days.

And she by their elder's commission
Was sought as a friend by the young ;—
Oh, fairest her form to the vision
And sweetest her name on the tongue.

To many a haunt of affliction,
That poverty shadowed like night,
She went like a sweet benediction,
And vanquished the darkness with light.
To stand by the couch of the dying,
To comfort, to clothe, and to feed,
She claimed as her duty, denying
Her bounty to no one in need.

While reigning the belle of a season,
Admirers her praises expressed ;
A stranger came doubting the reason,
But bowed to her charms with the rest.
As soon as she saw—she approved him,
And blushed—he approved her as well,
She heard his sweet story—and loved him,
She trusted his promise—and fell.

The aerolite hissing descending
Destroys in a moment the flower ;
So down on her spirit offending
Fell shame in its ravaging power.



And those who so often did fashion
Her pleasures to make them more sweet,
Now heard not the voice of compassion,
But turned her adrift in the street.

Her brain with delirium burning,
Her heart in her bosom like stone,
She wandered with weariful yearning,
Unpitied, contemned, and alone.
Oh no, not *alone*—for she carried
Another whose innocent life
Indicted wherever she tarried—
A mother who was not a wife.

And paying for folly expensive,
Aspasia felt agony wild
As her instinct became apprehensive
Of trouble befalling her child.
No shelter uprose to receive her,
No welcoming gladdened her ear,
And nature seemed working to grieve her
With all that was painful and drear.

From morning till evening, and sadly
From evening till morning again,
She sought for protection, and madly
Demanded from Christians in vain.

They gave her but cold consolation,
 They bade her depart and reform,
 And left her despairing salvation
 To combat a merciless storm.

One daybreak, all footsore and bleeding
 A woman was seen so distressed,
 Who gazed at the people unheeding,
 And fondled a corpse to her breast.
 Then hastened the usual officials
 Who seized on her treasure, and saw
 A chance for display that initials
 The paraphernalia of law.

No verdict of coroner's jury,
 Of "Famished and frozen to death,
 Could soften calamity's fury,
 Or give a renewal of breath.
 And censure was found unavailing,
 Though gruffly and legally hurled,
 To silence a mother bewailing
 The death of her hope in this world.

Still callous adversity held her,
 Affording no roof but the sky,
 And torturing with hunger, compelled her
 To crave as a beggar—or die.

What wonder when humbled so lowly,
That sinking like captive in thrall,
She fell into pitfalls unholy
As low as a woman can fall.

Companioning riotous wretches,
And flaunting in showy attire,
She followed the pleasure that stretches
Its friendship to slaves of desire.
And standing like bird of ill-omen
On pavements that echoed with feet,
She forfeited all that was woman,
And bartered her soul in the street.

But the blackest of all her offences,
The one that her cunning engrossed
Was luring with glittering pretences
Weak sisters where virtue is lost.
Alas ! she who lately was fleetest
In blessing and showing the way,
Now felt that of pleasures the sweetest
Was leading the thoughtless astray.

While Virtue lay calmly in slumber,
And Peace spread her wings to defend,
Aspasia made one of a number
That trespassed the night to the end.

Oh wildly the courtesans revelled,
 And often the wine passed around,
 Till with hair and apparel dishevelled
 The lost ones sank senseless to ground.

Why speak of her further adventure,
 The ruffians who struck her and cursed,
 The Pharisees loud in their censure,
 The last of misfortunes—and worst.
 Enough—by a gradual progression
 She came to her final disgrace ;
 And her past had no need of confession,
 Its record was stamped on her face.

Now blankly the world may behold her,
 Dispirited, ragged, and wrecked ;
 The toils of a vengeance enfold her,
 And youth becomes age by defect.
 She asks not the slightest exemption
 From suffering what deeper degrades ;
 Too lost for the thought of redemption,
 Too low for the lowest of trades,

The comrades that clustered around her
 In younger and happier days,
 Now see but the sins that confound her,
 And shrink from the touch that betrays.

They know her—but never to honour,
They name her—but never to bless ;
And heaping reproaches upon her,
They gladden to help her distress.

But yielding no sign of compliance
With anything uttered by them,
She turns with a look of defiance,
And silently dares them condemn.
Confused by her passionate pallor,
They leave her pursuing her crime,
Consorting with children of squalor,
And wasting a remnant of time.

She knows that her worthless betrayer
Still walks in a lofty degree ;
Society's portals but stay her,
For no one is guilty but she.
She sees him the darling of many,
The hero of banquet and ball,
The wretch with poor conscience, if any,
Whom dog it is flattery to call.

Oft Conscience in sudden espousal
Takes Guilt as her husband and lord,
Yet flies from the nuptial carousal
To stab at herself with a sword.

Who then the remorse can conjecture,
 That, bursting Aspasia's control,
 Bewilders her heart with its lecture,
 And plunges the steel in her soul.

No prospect of pleasure deceives her
 To smile at her darkness within ;
 For destiny sternly bereaves her
 Of all but the memories of sin.
 And wandering reluctant to mutter
 A prayer lest her lips should defame,
 She dreams of a death in the gutter,
 A grave in the shadow of shame.

O God ! is there none to forgive her,
 No mercy, no pity to spare ?
 Oh must her dishonour outlive her,
 And hell have success in its snare ?
 Oh shall not the wrongs that beset her,
 The thorns that encompass her path,
 Be merit that thou may'st forget her
 As worthy of nothing but wrath ?

O Thou ! whose unbounded dominion
 Exists without knowledge of age,
 Though fools with their paltry opinion
 Pretend to interpret Thy page ;

For sake of the saints who have striven,
Let sinners Thy clemency see,
When coming from man unforgiven,
And kneeling for pardon to Thee.

Young Romance

O ROVER o'er these waters wide !
Dost thou not fear their seething tide
That dashes round thy gilded boat
And dares it longer keep afloat ?
Dost thou not fear the spray may yield
A tarnish to thy argent shield ?
Dost thou not fear the tempest's doom
May wreck thy mantle and thy plume ;
Or with a sudden might prevail
Against thy fluttering purple sail ?
Why wearest thou so sad an air—
Thou of blue eyes and golden hair ?
And why—oh why thus darkly roam ?—
Hast thou no land, no friends, no home ?

O stranger, list, I'm young Romance,
And long I've ranged this drear expanse,
Without the semblance of a bliss,
Or prospect luring more than this.
Yet once my home was in a land
Where all was lovely, bright, and grand ;

Young Romance

And where the maids to win my vow
Wove garlands for my harp and brow ;
And said no matter who'd condemn
I'd still be beautiful to them.

Those were the days when power was mine,
And place and prestige seemed divine ;
When sought and courted, loved and praised,
On me nought but approval gazed ;
And, deemed in all things first and best,
No rival did my right contest.

Amid his oaks the Druid knew
How much my privilege could do ;
What potency of charm was mine
In making mistletoe divine.
When from the cromlech high and bright
His fire illumed the walls of night,
My spell in all its mystic guise
Gleamed in a hundred wondering eyes,
As woad-stained warriors, awed and mute,
Looked on the rite of dark repute,
And as the Druid spoke, with ease
Saw truth in all his auguries.

The Druid died, and through the scene
Sped foresters in jackets green ;
And trusty comrade found in me
Who dearly loved the greenwood free—
Whose bow the surest shaft could fling

At wild boar or at antlered king.

With loud halloo and roystering song,
And hearts as glad as day was long,
The foresters knew how to pass
The day without one sighed "alas!"
Yes, they were jolly fellows all,
Whom nought could sadden or appal,
And proved when battle thunders pealed
The stoutest archers in the field.

(When memory strikes some old-time note,
I feel a swelling in my throat,
And long with deep but pleasant pain
To live those dear old days again.)

The outlaw found me sword and shield
When justice called on him to yield ;
And, as with prestige more enhanced,
His feather in his bonnet danced,
And safely he through threatening ills
Rode to his fastness in the hills.
His daring deeds instead of blame
Won him an amplitude of fame.
He was of all men most adored—
He carved a ballad with his sword.
— E'en those who railed against his ways,
Were always forced at last to praise ;
And all because they could not see
Beyond the glamour spread by me.

What charming tales were mine to tell
About the hermit in his cell ;
The episode in early life
That made him shun the scenes of strife ;
With sombre cowl replace his helm
To serve another King and Realm,
A reckless youth, a cautious age,
A warrior changed into a sage.
Or crossed in love, to kill despair
How he abandoned all the fair ;
And in a lonely cloister crypt
Wrought at a lengthened manuscript,
Half dreaming that the tardy signs
On his illuminated lines
Would be the mirror of his times
To distant years and distant climes,
And cause posterity to praise
The chronicler of vanished days.

Forth from the castle gate at dawn
My banner by my pages borne,
A thousand courtiers in my train,
I rode across the flowery plain
To meet the gallant chief who brought
The spoils for which he long had fought—
The first and loveliest—her, his bride,
So gentle, kind and dignified ;
Whose damask cheeks and soulful eyes

Were witnesses to sunny skies.

With flush of smiles and greeting cheers,
And laughter melting into tears,
We met their coming, and we gave
A welcome to the fair and brave.
And proved that search the world around,
At home the warmest hearts are found,
The love is there that sanctifies,
An earthly glimpse of Paradise.

And then, our salutations done,
With halberds glistening in the sun,
And trumpet blare as heralds told
The coming of the conqueror bold ;
Soon homeward moved the cavalcade
In all its brilliancy arrayed.

Fast running from ambrosial bowers,
Sweet children strewed our path with flowers ;
And many a bright-eyed country lass
So coyly stood to see us pass ;
And pleased as she, her ruddy swain
Forgot to gather in the grain.

On, on we went in jovial mood,
The jester mocked in license rude ;
The minstrel touched his harp and sang ;
The armoured steeds made martial clang ;
And hamlets buried 'mid the trees
Heard mingled murmurs in the breeze,

And wondered who did revelling keep,
Disturbing them in noonday sleep.

And what a tumult ! what a shout !
What welcomes wild came ringing out
From soldiery that stood defence
Upon the frowning battlements,
And made a weirdly gesturing show,
Reflected in the moat below.

Our banners waved, our armour flashed,
As we across the drawbridge dashed ;
Aloft the portcullis was sent,
And in the court we clattering went.

Then gay confusion reigned supreme,
Conjuring up a whirling dream ;
And all dismounted, chief and man,
And hither thither pages ran
To bear some lordly helm and shield
Scarred with the brunt of many a field.

The hounds, too, bayed a welcome deep,
Stretched lazily no more to sleep ;
But frolicked in a gladsome band,
And leaped to lick the master's hand ;
Remembering a voice and face
Linked with the madness of the chase.

And pledging health and friendship fine,
The goblets brimmed with rarest wine,
The tankards foamed with amber ale,

Young Romance

27

And gossips told the newest tale.

Then merriest of the revellers all,
I led the splendid festival ;
My song held listeners in a trance,
My step was lightest in the dance,
My story won the most applause,
My wisdom beggared all the laws ;
My frolic left no hearts to grieve
The passing day, the falling eve ;
My torch drove darkness out of night,
My bonfire set the hills alight ;
And banishing the thought of pain,
I made the old feel young again ;
And left amid approving cheers,
Bright memories to after years.

Away to some lone sedgy mere,
With those my bosom held most dear,
I often went at morning rise
With heart aflame and glistening eyes ;
In many sports I well could boast,
But hawking pleased me the most.

Soon as the startled heron rose,
Suspicious of approaching foes,
My falcon freed once more to sight,
And upwards flung to haste her flight,
With unrelenting wing pursued
Across the marshy solitude,

Till poisoning o'er her quarry's track,
She swooped with sudden, hurtling crack,
And striking beak and talons deep,
Bore down her prize with spiral sweep
Of wings, that beat with gentle whirr
And spoke the old practitioner.

I galloped up, secured the game,
And called my pet her favourite name ;
Replaced her hood, and bade her stand
A victress on her master's hand.

Though I was of the kindly few,
At times I could be cruel too ;
And eagerly some prize to win
Forget myself and stoop to sin.

O thus we deal the deadly blow,
And reck not when our skill we show—
When spilling blood and stopping breath,
The life of joy is often death.

To name my future enterprise
Astrologers reviewed the skies ;
And maids o'er ivied casements hung
To hear my praise by moonlight sung ;
And sporting on the village green
In poor disguise I oft was seen ;
And in the bowers of roses wild
I sang away the evenings mild ;—
O happy all the year around,

As summer left me, was I found
When forest doffed their robes of gold
And shivered in the winter's cold.

Ah, woe to dread and pain to feel
That love to memory may appeal,
Yet only find a dull response
That knells for things so blissful once !

The bowers wherein I wantoned free
Can never more be dear to me ;
Nor grots that gave me summer rest
Receive me as a blithesome guest ;
Since all my friends—the ever gay
From that fair region stole away,
And conquerors came so strange and cold,
That lone I lived and unconsolated.
Though with a spirit thrilling high
I walked beneath my native sky,
The strangers, passionless as ice,
And giving all things size and price,
Conceived no amity for me,
But left my sorrow past degree.

In pride of intellect they made
Distasteful every path I strayed ;
And deemed my legends, thoughts, and acts,
As rubbish when compared with facts.
For Science (pleasing as a child
With visions strange and actions mild),

Young Romance

Matured in years, and high elate,
Presided o'er her large estate,
And distant worlds as well as this
Submitted to analysis.

A mistress most severe in mien,
She ruled the strangers as a queen ;
And they within themselves rejoiced
To hear her dogmas loudly voiced ;
As she portrayed a thing, they saw,
And every nod she gave was law.

But oh ! a sorrow to relate,
Her deep researches called from Fate
A judgment ; and it came to pass
That men through my enchanted glass
No more discerned the gorgeous hue
That once robed all things to the view.

Contemptuous of each sweet disguise,
She spoiled the story of the skies ;
And in the moon so silvery chaste
Saw blackness of a burnt-out waste ;
She dulled the rainbow's lovely gleam,
And traced to illness every dream ;
The sweet old tales she proved untrue,
And banished passion from the new ;
She probed the secret of the mine,
And held that nothing was divine.

She read the wreckage of the past,

And in the first day saw the last ;
 She caused the very stones to speak—
 Recite their histories unique ;
 She, postulating many a plan,
 Evolved a strange descent of man ;
 She weighed the planets in their flight,
 And its components saw in light ;
 And mounting on the wings of thought
 She made the universe her court,
 Unravelling slow and by degrees
 The threads of all the mysteries ;
 And into questions most abstruse
 She let the streams of logic loose ;
 And out of one poor fossil bone
 She built an animal unknown—
 Extinct long ere primeval man
 Lord of the savage forests ran.

Unmatched in patience, strong in will,
 Each day she showed increase of skill ;
 She weighed and counted, watched and planned
 And spread invention o'er the land.
 Nought that was trifling, deep, or high,
 Escaped the magic of her eye ;
 And as she formulated laws,
 Her votaries worshipped with applause ;
 And gravely said they were content
 To live beneath her blandishment ;

Agreeing oft when tales were told
That hapless were the days of old.

She in a second, by the Sun
Caused magic pictures to be done ;
She next let living Mortals see
Right through their own anatomy ;
And taking humour by the heels,
She put the human race on wheels,
And in their clicking flight reviewed
A pedalling motley multitude.

Electric wings she gave to sound,
And voiced her fame the world around,
And fast as spoken, speech was seen
Self-written on her tablets keen,
That distant years might love or dread
The deathless voices of the dead.

She drove a chariot of steel,
And chained the lightning to her wheel ;
And promised soon through topless space
To beat the meteors in the race,
Confounding laws of gravity,
And pomp of old philosophy.

Huge engines wrought with groaning stress,
And proved their iron mightiness ;
The foundry furnace threw its glare
Into the chilly midnight air ;
And factory chimneys, belching smoke,

Made nature feel a tyrant's yoke ;
 The flowery vale in mining haste
 Was left a dreary, barren waste ;
 So Science all the landscape changed,
 And nature from herself estranged,
 And all to please a stolid herd
 That gold to even life preferred.

The men so sober in their views
 Wore costumes of as sober hues ;
 No colour, shape,—no hint of soul
 Could please their fancy or cajole ;
 And all their pleasure seemed to be
 In dolorous monotony.
 With one desire they were imbued,
 It was for business aptitude
 To sew up fortune stitch by stitch,
 And die the richest of the rich.

The women not to be outdone
 In shewing newness to the sun,
 Thought nature, working in despite,
 Unsexed them as a vicious slight—
 That they, who thus were beardless bred,
 Had spirits fit for men instead.

Repairing loss of mannish look,
 They to the public platform took ;
 With strident voice and swaggering pose
 Proclaimed the cause of all their woes ;

Inferred that such a paradox
Made them so many laughingstocks ;
And hailed the good time coming when
They would have womanized the men.

As good excuse why they should rule,
They said man was a drunken fool
Who made one-sided laws, and gave
His sister thralldom of a slave ;
He did in all but evil fail,
And knew no conscience but the gaol.

But while thus gushingly they preached,
Their doctrines but themselves impeached.
And though they lectured man on shame,
His teachers merited the blame.
In spite of all that overtakes him,
The man is what his mother makes him.

Then easily thou wilt understand
Why I contemned them in the land—
Those "up-to-dates" who having reared
A brood of witlings, fierce and feared,
Thought that would as a reason do
For them to spoil the country too—
But let them pass as well we must,
To know them was to feel disgust.

Lo, as they vulgarized the scene
Blest with remembrances serene,
I thought of *ladies* who bereft

It of its light the day they left ;
Whom it was heaven, as I have proved,
To love, and oh ! by them be loved.

Economists and all their train,
With facts and figures on the brain,
Invaded every range of life,
And Mammon's legions joined the strife.
The credulous were ready tools
To all whose commerce lay in fools ;
Adversity's dull circumstance
Gave usurers an easy chance ;
And parsimony made a shift
With dingy platitudes on " Thrift."

No more the sword in battle held
High rank as when brave knights excelled,
When breast to breast they met the foe,
And put their manhood in the blow ;
No more the worthy lover came
To breathe his soul-devouring flame ;
To mark the maid's ingenuous art
That answered for a fervent heart.
For now success in love or war
Subservient was to moneyed store ;
So ambushed cowards, doubly mean,
Ensconced behind a dread machine,
Might overwhelm with leaden rain
The brave who dared the open plain ;

And wealthy reynards, deified,
Might buy the kisses of the bride ;
And deem her beauty, heart and sense
Equivalent to haggled pence.

O pride ! O shame ! O life ! O death !

O rotten substance—empty breath !

Love lost its pure nobility,
And died the grand old chivalry.

Thus Science dazzled to betray,
She mechanized the soul away ;
And in her blessing was a curse,
And all her goodness was for worse.

And while she shook the power of kings,
And in her dreams accomplished things,
A recluse, and against my will,
With her dull slaves I languished till
My weary heart was fit to break ;
And I could see beyond mistake
My life ran in a different groove,
Their joy was riches, mine was love.

They saw me cross the crystal lake,
And heard my song the echoes wake ;
They saw me climb the dizzy height
All roseate with the sunset light ;
They heard my horn in joyance when
The stag was bounding down the glen ;
They knew me when the dark lagoon

Was bridged with glistenings of the moon ;
 They knew me when the maidens told
 By change of flowers how seasons rolled ;
 But circumstances all were vain,
 For they beheld me with disdain,
 And passed me as if known and seen
 I were not or had never been.
 When lovers saw the star of eve
 They only turned away to grieve ;
 When shepherds roved by meadow streams
 They dreamt no more their olden dreams ;
 And when the battle sounded near
 There rode no dashing cavalier ;
 For all forsaken and undone
 I was within that land as none.

And yet they spoke of me, and said,
 "The darling, young Romance is dead ;"
 And wondered if misfortune made
 My grave in silentness and shade ;
 While all the time if they would see
 I danced before them gay and free ;
 Or tuned my harp, but tuned to find
 My audience grumbling at the wind.

Neglected thus, with nought beyond,
 But cause to more and more despond,
 My days I pined, my nights I wept
 In wearing grief that never slept ;

And felt at last, in deep despair,
My home no longer could be there.

I, too, took flight across the surge
To seek an isle on ocean's verge—
Atlantis, where, as fairies tell,
My early friends have gone to dwell.

Years, many years I sought that isle,
And longed full sore for friendship's smile ;
I longed as would a wearied bird
For rest that ocean has deferred ;
As would a rose cut in its blush
For nurture of its parent bush ;
As would a lover bliss denied
For presence of a girl that died.

Ah me ! the heart has motions strange,
For dwelling in familiar range,
It seems to idle at some shrine,
But when the object that did shine
By death or fortune is removed,
Too late it finds that it has loved.

O didst thou ever find the place
Where went thy friends of early grace ?
And did they have with open arms
A welcome for thy thousand charms ?
O didst thou ever hear them speak,
And feel their kisses warm thy cheek,

Young Romance

39

And their soft breath like vernal air
Flow gently through thy golden hair ?

Ah stranger, no : though time and tide
Extended in their fulness wide,
The years and waves rolled sadly by,
And nought there came to glad mine eye.
No mountains dimly blue uprose
To guide my way and end my woes ;
No cheering welcome o'er the sea
Familiar voices sang to me ;
But still Atlantis ever seemed
So near me when I thought or dreamed,
That hopes as fast as they were born
Seemed stars to harbinger the morn.

The albatross above the spray
Dashed boldly on its pilgrim way ;
The petrel screamed its wild delight
As swelled the tempest in its might ;
The frigate-bird in dreamy sleep
Sailed on the winds across the deep ;
The gulls shrieked over sailors' graves,
Safe in the trough of yeasty waves ;
The flying fishes gleamed a space
As fierce dorados gave them chase ;
The swallows of the agile wing
Pursued the wanderings of Spring ;

And argosies by fresh winds fanned
Bore treasures home from Summer Land ;
But ah ! despite such living stress,
All but increased my wretchedness ;
And lonelier, sadder grew my state,
And darker frowned the face of Fate.

Oft as the day declined to rest,
And glory burned along the West,
I looked into the gorgeous air,
And thought I saw Atlantis there.
Enchanted isle and nooks of ease
Were resting in the skyey seas.
In their pure iridescence shone
The light of all my pleasures gone ;
And, sweetly tempting, towards them rolled
A dancing path of flaming gold.

But vain their loveliness—oh vain !
So briefly bright, so swift to wane ;
And false that path, for underneath
It yawned the icy Caves of Death.

I kept a starlit watch by night,
And brooked Time's laziness in flight ;
For long, too long, had been my quest
For the sweet island of the blest.
The seabird gave a lonely cry,
The billow answered with a sigh ;
A sudden clamour wildly rose

And came as sudden to a close—
 Some ship unseen had met its fate,
 And foundered with its living freight ;
 And louder than the deafening gale
 There burst the anguish of a wail—
 The lost soul of a Buccaneer
 Was speeding on its dread career.
 So slowly passed the night forlorn,
 And oh ! with each recurring dawn
 My eye would travel far and keen,
 But still Atlantis was unseen.
 The arching sky, the lonely sea,
 And sorrow seemed my destiny.

O stranger ! tedious though I tell
 Of friends and pleasures loved so well,
 I, telling truth, am not afraid
 My tale shall ever be gainsaid.
 The simple truth, and that alone,
 Is mightier than the mightiest throne.

To dear Atlantis, dearer now,
 With eager heart and ready prow,
 O stranger, canst thou be my guide ?
 Thou canst not—then in peace abide !

My weary search I must renew
 With hopes more faint, and oh ! more few ;
 And all my joys like vapours cast
 To glitter in the distant past.

But ere to former haunts I turn,
O cleave your depths, ye waters stern !
And hide beneath your deathless rage
The Spirit of the Golden Age,
That never may irreverent eyes
See where the saddest pilgrim lies !

The Hill of Visions


(From the R—— of M——, an Unfinished
Epic)

SOON we came
To a strange hill that rose up vaguely from
A solemn plain. The Ancient bade me climb
It, for it was the wondrous Hill of Visions.
And while he waited at its base, I made
A swift ascent of seeming nothingness,
Till I stood on a ghostly peak above
A mystic world.

I turned me towards the West,
And, rising up from out the mists of earth,
I saw a lovely phantom seated in
A golden chariot decked with rose-wreaths, and
Drawn by a flight of Cupids laughing in
A fragile harness woven of sweet flowers.
Lo, as her chariot mounted up and wheeled

Soft music on the insubstantial air,
The lovely shade, a coy allurement in
Her eye and joy ineffable aglow
On every feature, with suggestions sweet
Outcharmed herself, and floated o'er the world
Singing a dreamy song. Whoever heard
That song yearned for a beauty undefined ;
Whoever saw the singer, sickening of
Monotonous content, full eagerly
Rushed forth, in his infatuation wishing
Only to touch the seeming loveliness
That reft him of his reason, leaving him
A captive to its charms. O never lived
The mortal who heard not the magic song—
Felt not the fleeting loveliness allure.
Over the world since immemorial time
She had been journeying, subjecting all
With inspiration that no horror, woe,
Or pain could wholly quench while heart beat warm,
And soul retained a vestige of desire.
O'erwhelmed by her strange witchery, the world
Seemed hypnotized ; and as the charmer fled
Over the dusty ruts and toilsome tracks
Of every day—fast hastening to the future,
I saw the landscape towards which she was speeding
Wear the perfection seen only in dreams.
Its chastened sunlight glowed on gardens of

Bright blooms and luscious fruits (a harmony
Of perfumed form and colour) ; on soft couches
And gracious silken awnings ; on crystal fountains
And lilled brooks, and golden sands ; on rich
Pavilions where the sounds of feast and song
Hungered the vagrant wind ; on fortune lavish
Of friends and gold ; on Nature blushing in
The arms of Art ; on peace and glory of
A Paradise where every sense is quickened,
And rapture thrills the soul of fond desire
That lives on beauty and still sighs for more.
And thus the peasant left his fields, the lord
His hall, the maid her flowers, the student his
Old books, the poet his bright dreams, the merchant
His counting-house, the naturalist his moths,
The Bedouin his palms, the soldier his
Renown, to swell the multitude that stretched
Their hands out towards the enchantress, spellbound by
Her beauty, and the joys of that fair region
Toward which she moved like an all-glorious dream.
But while all things were in a glamour wrapped,
The infatuated multitude were lured
By the bright phantom into quagmires and
Morasses ; into pitfalls, gulfs, and quicksands ;
Into the haunts of serpents, wolves, and tigers ;
Through fires and over precipices dire ;
Into dread spots infected with disease



Loathsome beyond expression ; Yea, all those
That worshipped her the most for their excess
Were dazzled by her into worst misfortunes,
Souls hell-corrupted, and dishonoured death.
Despite their witnessing such terrible
Examples, millions undeterred rushed on
With fascinated faces, trampling on
The weak and faint that stumbled in the chase,
Shouting in frenzy : "'Tis the joy of joys
Only to touch such loveliness." But oh,
The tantalizing singer, dreamily smiling,
With one hand welcomed on the weary throngs,
And with the other lazily pointed to
The sighed-for land, the grand illusion that
No human traveller ever should set foot in,
The beauty always near yet ever far.
Sore-stricken wretches, leprous, cancered, and
Consumptive, fell back straggling from the rush,
Moaning in fierce despair to see the one
They had so worshipped gaily fleeting from
Them, leaving them but miseries of a vain
Remembrance and the pangs of black disease.
Their glazing eyes looked back at the sad past—
The path so rashly travelled, and beheld
It strewn with withered flowers and broken goblets
With unstrung harps and faded draperies,
With scattered fragments of rich banquets and

Forsaken idols—Yea, with all the trumperies
 Pleasing to vanity now scorned and in
 The dust. The witches Poverty and Shame
 Sat cursing by the wayside ; and, fired by
 Their imprecations, outraged Conscience like
 A fury scourged the sick and dying with
 Remorseful thoughts of misdirected zeal.
 Further the phantom journeyed ; further, fainter
 Sounded her song entrancing ; and the sweet
 Land of untrodden beauty lay serenely
 Beyond the passless barriers of Fate.
 Sadness grew sadder in the lengthening wake
 Of the fair singer. Skeletons bleached on
 A waste of dust and ashes ; and through vents
 And fissures sulphurous flames shot up, and fierce
 Satanic laughter sounded, welcoming
 The dread approach of an enormous demon
 Whose presence filled the sky with ponderous horror ;
 Whose eyes blazed down upon the evil tracks
 Of her who led her votaries to a glittering doom,
 And shone with beauty real only in
 Anticipation. And the demon passing,
 His great dominion greater grew, and still
 Would grow, till all the dream-built empire, all
 The vicious actions, and confounding fall
 Of Folly lay beneath the shadow of
 His dreary wings.

Then, looking towards the South,
I saw the world encompassed with a shadow
Full dark, which brightened presently into
A phosphorescent cloud as clearly sweet
A voice seraphic called, "Ye mortals ! O
Rejoice, and let the incense of your hearts
Ascend ; for from her home celestial comes
The germ—the soul of signal excellence
To dwell awhile with you, that ye may learn,
In her impressive presence, that from her
Alone life takes its true ennoblement
And death its all of sanctity." Swift then
A beam of light most radiant dispersed
The glimmering haze, and lit a landscape that
Contained the elements of all that gives
Sweet character to nature. In the foreground,
A rose-bush of supernal symmetry
Wore over verdant leafiness a crown
Of buds just bursting to the blush. And lo,
I saw a scene within the scene, that, fading,
Presently was succeeded by another.
This, too, departed ; and another scene
Succeeded, and another. First, in a house,
Preyed on by angry flames, an infant screamed
In dire extremity ; and with a shriek
Swiftly its mother dashed through crackling terrors
And tried to save the half-charred form ; alas !

Forlorn to perish ; yet full glad to die
 Claspng her treasure, deeming not her deed
 A sacrifice. Next, agonised with sickness,
 Famished and cold, a dying worker sighed
 Not for himself but for those dearest to him—
 His wife and little ones. When offered by them
 Some poor, begged crusts, he shook his head and bade
Them eat, not think of him who never more
 Could earn the gladness of their hearth. And then
 I saw young souls and noble reverently
 Attending to the weak and old with words
 Of cheer and help ungrudged ; supporting them
 With calm hopes of a rest eternal. So
 A faint, sweet smell of earthly flowers rose from
 The twilight pathway ; and their charges passed
 The shadowed Gate and walked the glorious fields
 Of Paradise. And over graves that hid
 The shattered idols of their love, I saw
 Fond mourners lay bright garlands woven in
 Spots sought and sanctified by memory.
 Now rose an awful cry that echoed through
 The heavens, as a nation dire oppressed
 Gave vent to its despair and maddened in
 Its chains. With flashing eye and firm-set lip,
 A patriot rushed between his motherland
 And tyranny, and battling for her rights
 Died as a man should die. More instances

Of loving duty passed, and gradually
A truth grew manifest—Self-sacrifice
Is the broad stair to heaven. Lo, as each scene
Concluded, as a point emphatic, one
Of the rose-buds burst into perfect bloom,
With fragrance passing sweet, till there remained
But one bud to complete the coronal
Worthy the heart's renown. And now I saw
A noble maiden, who, because she loved
A youth as noble, though of lowly birth
And poor, was cast out by her angry sire
From her luxurious home to wander in
A frozen wilderness where wild beasts ravened,
And everything was desolate but love.
As the devoted couple went on hand in hand,
Fierce gleaming eyes and crouching forms told them
That death was near. The maiden passing her
Fair arm around her lover, smiled her faith
And tremulously low and sweetly clear
She sang a heart-song that was dear to him
In other and in happier days. And lo,
A miracle! as she intensely poured
Forth melody, the wintry aspect of
The forest thawed, and genial sunshine fell
Upon the budding glories of the spring.
And, more miraculous, the nature of
The forest-denzens too changed, and they

The Hill of Visions

51

Enraptured paused, bewitched of evil by
Melodious sound. And stealing nearer as
She sang, grim lions, tigers, panthers, bears,
Wolves and hyenas in a circle crouched,
Ravished with joy and motionless as stone.
The timid zebra and the tall giraffe
Saw not their forest foes, but boldly came
Dead to all else but song. The serpent swayed
Its head in rhythmic thrall to the sweet music
That drew the lizard from its hole, and hushed
All things to silence, save doves cooing in
Mountainous trees and robins twittering in
The nest. Full suddenly, as rapture thrilled
The very air, a choir invisible
Took up the glorious theme, and faintly far
Charmed Heaven with cadence of its soft refrain.
Then coming nearer, nearer still, fast grew
The sounds felicitous till, where sky-portals
Oped blueely through the opalescent clouds,
A band of angels lightly tripped to earth,
And as the last rose bloomed they plucked it with
Its lovely mates and wove a garland which
(Still keeping vocal unison with her
Who fondly clasped her lover round) they bore
As a bright trophy to the sinless land ;
And as its gates oped with a welcome to
Their coming, 'mid a burst of jubilation

The light of God shone grandly forth, and with
Its very luminousness blinded me
From seeing more as if I had sunk swift
Into the caverns of Plutonian night.

I faced the East. Upon a massy hill
I saw a building proudly seated like
The Parthenon of old. The paths to the
Transcendent fabric were so few and so
Bewildering, hazarding such failures, that
To climb their length precipitously rough,
Then stand before the stately porch, seemed fit
Endeavour for the god-like mind, far past
Accomplishment (even in dreams) by all,
However favourably named, if named
Among the multitude of common men
Predestined to mortality. And lo,
Upon the steps before the splendid pile
There stood a beauteous one whose bearing spoke
Her confidence and dignity. She wore
A chaplet of the laurel green, and in
Her hand bore others, holding them aloft
As to the drowsy world she cried with no
Uncertain voice, "Come ye who would possess
The guerdon of the worthy. Come and yours
Shall be the privilege of sitting in
My Temple, garlanded by me. For you

Shall be the incense of all time, a light
 That no light ever lessens, and a name
 Euphonius in all anthems of renown."
 Over the world through cities, towns and hamlets ;
 Through forest solitudes and treeless wastes,
 That welcome sounded, wakening men as from
 A sleep ; but many lazily deferred
 Acceptance till the morrow ; many gaped
 And stared with goggle eyes confounded by
 Its import inexplicable. A few
 Began to dream strange dreams of hardships pleasant—
 Perambulating unfrequented paths
 And climbing unascended hills. Now on
 The plain another, radiant as she
 Who ruled the fateful steep, arose and glowed
 With hope and energy of one in whom
 Was dominant the spirit that imbues
 The lion rushing from his lair, and makes
 The eagle soar above the sunlit crags, although
 Through it once angels lost their paradise.
 And lo ! the Goddess, with a kindling eye
 And face aflame with inspiration, spoke
 Remonstrance not to dolts and weaklings, but
 Invoked the dreaming few to vindicate
 Themselves with deeds.—“Why wait ye that have heard
 And *understood* my sister's welcome? See,
 The gate of golden opportunity

Stand now ajar,—rush through, rush through, and though
Ten thousand obstacles rise in your path,
Think of the garland and surmount them all,
Or die as soldiers in the ranks of fame.—
Ye spirits that so variously direct
The enterprise of worthy minds, ye too
Are under obligation to the one
Who welcomes from her lofty post. Ye on
Your clients must impress, success lies in
Persistency of effort. Every hero
By dint of action letters glory's page.
His perseverance proves his merit, lights
The beacon of example, consecrates
His name."—Portentous signs were seen as 'mid
The murmured wonder of uncultured men
The Genii of aspiring souls arose,
Enjoining those beneath their influence born
To leave the stagnant sloughs of sad inertia,
And let the tide of bold ambition bear
Their greatness towards its hidden destiny.
First one of martial port and equipage,
Blowing her thunder trumpet, roused the world,
Till nations crumbled 'mid the clash of arms.
Another, glowing with high inspiration,
Opened the book of nature, and in song
Expressed its inmost loveliness. Another,
Seraphic-featured, touched a golden lyre,

Stirring the soul with sounds of sweet, sweet sadness
 That thrilled with something of eternity.
 Another, gazing with enchanted eye,
 Saw beauty hiding in the wayside rocks,
 And grandeur buried deep beneath the roots
 Of ancient hills. Another dared to show
 Nature her painted semblance, and evolve
 From nothingness a beauty that was half
 Divine. Another voiced the fervour of
 Exalted intellect, and on the wings
 Of words sent truth untrammelled o'er the world
 Till Justice ruled, and tyrants shrank from slaves
 Ransomed with eloquence from chains. Another,
 Flashing the lightning from her hand, passed on,
 Triumphant reducing chaos to
 Her sober rule, and making Nature yield
 The closest secrets of her mighty powers.
 Another with a pensive eye dwelt on
 The dead past and the fiery-hearted present,
 Reasoning out the future, and in all
 Things seeing the enduring justice of
 A loving Providence. Fulfilling their
 Proud duty, thus the Genii severally
 Infused their passion into human souls ;
 And soon in storming thousands up the steep
 The Aspirants to glory rushed, intent
 To wear the garland or lie down—souls lost


In nameless death. While cannon boomed and war's
Red lightning flashed ; while Hell forth vomited
Dread carnage and pale Mercy trembling fled ;
The Soldier madly murdered, recking not
His trampling on the mutilated dead,
Whose glassy eyes upstared as if a vengeance
Was threatening from the murky heavens. The Poet
Amid sad-coloured and impoverished scenes
Dreaming his glorious dreams grew glad, and cheered
Poor toilers as he gave expression to
The thoughts they deemed too subtle for the art
Of speech ; and, lovingly, the dream of all
His dreams was oh ! to lift the weary world
Up to ethereal heights upon the wings
Of a majestic song. The grand Composer,
Wrapped in self gloom, watched young Aurora hang
Her curtain forth, and felt that every wind
Breathed of mystery. To calm his vague
Unrest he sought the secret of the stars,
And soared above his low environment,
Working in patterns of sublimity
The laces and embroideries of sweet sound.
The Sculptor, with his ever potent mallet
And chisel, from imprisoning marble freed
Divinity of form : inspiring men
With petrified ideals, making life
And passion burn through icy pallor of

Unfeeling stone. The Painter confidently
 Dipping his brush in sunset glories and
 The shades of Erebus, that ages in
 The womb of far futurity might see,
 On canvas fixed with photographic truth
 The varying moods of Nature, and portrayed
 With gorgeous force and rose-bud delicacy
 The fairest fancies of the poet's dreams,
 Subduing thousands that in silence gazed
 Awed by the art of an enchanter's hand.
 The Orator, inspired by grand ideals and
 Epochal changes, on the platform joined
 Grave wisdom to transcendent imagery,
 And with a pulsing tide of eloquence
 Swayed the emotions of applauding throngs
 In bondage to his tongue. The Scientist
 With dogged perseverance loudly knocked
 At Nature's door, and claimed the right to share
 The knowledge of her mysteries ; and as
 She answered tardily with stinted truths,
 The more he knew he seemed to know the less :
 (Man's knowledge is but as a grain of dust
 That glimmers in a gulf of ignorance
 Wide as the universe itself). The Sage,
 Wrinkled and sad, sat on the borderland
 Of life and death, and saw in veriest trifles
 The germs of truth which strengthened more his grasp

Of every-day economies, and gave
His eye assurance to perceive beyond
The damps and darkness of corrupting death
The rosy light of immortality,
A dream of beauty and a hope fulfilled.
Thus eagerly a various throng upstrove
To gain the garland and approval of
The Mistress of the Mount ascended but
By paths of peril. Many at the outset
Sank down exhausted. Many conquered half
The height before the effort beat them. Some
Climbed almost to the summit there to perish.
Some under happy auspices seemed born ;
For as they climbed the world gave loud applause,
And eager to anticipate their triumph,
Crowned them with laurel. But delusive was
Its homage.—Glory knew them not, and they,
With dead leaves on their foreheads, fell like stars
From the bright firmament of Memory.
Others unknown, unseen, in sorrow and
In shadow upwards strove till suddenly,
While Envy glared in mute astonishment,
They stood in presence of the Gracious One,
And claimed the symbol of their grand success.
Wherever one by force original
Clambered to lofty eminence, a host
Of mediocrities attempted to

Follow his track, accentuating by
Their failures and incompetence his worth.
But every Genius has his imitators
As every comet has its tail. The few,
The noble few, who struggled upwards till
Their merit blazed into a perfect fame,
Garlanded by the proud and queenly One,
Serenely dignified, with giant souls
Majestic in their immortality,
Exalted sat above the fretful world,
Like stars set in the heavens that shiningly
Direct afar the march of humankind,
Nor ever lessen in their light despite
The mists of earth, the flight of centuries,
The fall of nations, and the force of change.

I still would learn, and turning to the North
There stretched before me, as it were, a waste
Immeasurable. Across it travel-stained
And weary an Old Man was journeying,
Bearing an hour-glass. As he watched the sand
Monotonously fall, he sadly cried
"For ever"! And a Demon Echo from
A sepulchre replied, "For ever, yes,
For ever!" Madly following the Old
Man's flight there rushed a mighty multitude
Exhausting all the wide diversity



Of age, complexion, creed, and fortune. Some
Played dulcimers ; some decked themselves with flowers ;
Some resolutely faced the way of Fate ;
While others tore their hair and beat their breasts
In dreadful lamentation. By the path,
Dusty with passing of so many feet,
Myriads of vampires, foxes, wolves, and serpents,
Gathered to harass and annoy with such
Ceaseless malignity that many a soul
Despairing of a Heaven sighed for Hell.
The major portion of the multitude,
In individual contradictions, leagued
Themselves with various idolatries.
Some worshipped stones, and some the stars, and some
Themselves. Some wove a creed out of the shreds
Of ancient mysteries ; and others in
Dark corners groped for variegated faith.—
Serene and steadfast, mighty in the proof
Of merit, alien to their company,
A few, a very few approved the truth
And sought the glory of a duteous day.
Unknown or known but to be vilified,
Friendless—yet blest far more than lonely ; poor—
Yet more than rich, with spirits far beyond
The heaped-up dust of earthly affluence,
Kind and forgiving, conscience justified,
Not searching mists of far futurity

For light, but labouring in their present for
 The glory promised to the pure in heart,
 So on they journeyed, and it needed not
 A herald to proclaim, "The saints of God
 Are passing through the land!" With these sublime
 Exceptions, these alone, the people of
 The lengthened caravan all more or less
 Did reverence to a golden tiger that
 Bit all who fondled with his glittering coat,
 While Wisdom vainly proved his treachery.
 At every step of him who bore the hour-glass
 A fire would momentarily blaze into
 Which many threw their threadbare clothes, then in
 Fresh garments dressed themselves. Though each man's
 robe

Was different to his neighbour's, still each man
 Believed his was the best ; so cried aloud,
 "Behold I wear the robe of truth ; of all
 Men I alone have wisdom, I alone
 Am blest." Forthwith and ever after, he
 Disparaged everyone whose clothing was
 Not uniform with his. He deafened all
 The world with fierce opprobrium, mistook
 Foul hate for sanctity, and made Peace fly
 A fugitive from his unreasoning zeal.
 He served the Devil in the name of God.
 Above the journey of the multitude

Engaged in mighty conflict for the right
To dominate its course and destiny,
Two sovereign spirits winged the air, and though
Unseen by those they strove o'er, evidenced
Their presence by incessant action. One—
The noblest, rosy-cheeked and sunny-eyed,
Arrayed in snowy vesture (fringed with light),
And chapleted with amaranth, seemed in
Her radiant grace and sweet benignity
The embodiment of all that's beautiful,
A visitant from Paradise, the soul
Of Nature subtly felt when rosy children
Wanton in happiness, and Spring first wears
Her virgin green and glory of bright flowers.
Her rival—he of aspect sinister
And will inflexible,—bones fleshless wrapped
In fluttering sable cerements reeking with
Putrescence, in sublimity of horror
Like an enormous thunder-cloud moved o'er
The face of Nature, terrible his shadow,
More terrible his silence. Nature shrank
From his benumbing touch and trembled at
His awful gloom. His sorrow stole into
The heart of joy, and Reason palsied at
His sure approach—no hope of bliss could live
Within his presence for his glory was
Destruction and his name was Death! Alas

For all !—now stealing with insidious art,
 Now dashing like a raging hurricane,
 The Demon in a thousand various ways
 Wreaked vengeance on the helpless multitude
 That followed him who walked the path of fate.
 The young, the old, the rich, the poor, the strong,
 The weak, the true, the false, all felt his rage
 And sudden fell, or perished slowly of
 A cureless wound. But lo ! she of the kind
 And placid brow—the Spirit Beautiful
 Hastened to their relief, and as the sad
 Ones felt her presence they appealed to her
 For aid. Compassionating their distress,
 She faced their enemy and, with her arms
 Outspread above the stricken ones, looked an
 Entreaty such as might have softened all
 The callousness of Hell. But no ! he was
 Implacable, and as his ravening grew
 Her darlings met his earliest glance and felt
 His deadliest blow. The Spirit Beautiful
 Was not dismayed ; and as her dear ones sank
 Pallid and motionless she gently breathed
 On them ; and, as some rose reanimated,
 She stopped the grisly arm upraised again
 To strike—but only for a little while.
 The bearer of the hour-glass passed on, and
 Despite the tireless efforts of their sweet

Protectress, forced to follow, one by one,
Earth's children met their fate and every step
Was littered with the dead. The song of joy,
The bitter wailing both were silenced ; and
The glowing garland pleased no more. The poor
Conceits, the gnawing cares, the fatuous lies,
The glittering treacheries all were ended. He
Who, 'mid the shouts of adulation, in
His pride was borne upon the shoulders of
His fellows, with the mendicant despised
And famished side by side now lay at rest,
Poor equals—dust and dust. Now Pleasure seemed
A rash and futile dream, and Glory but
The shadow of a shadow. Pausing in
His black career—his hate insatiable,
Lifting on high a withered cypress, Death,
Victor unparalleled ! reviewed the past—
His wide and far-extending battlefield,
And saw a bleak and gloomy wilderness
Dotted with ruins of mighty empires and
Sad vestiges of man. And lo ! far in
The darkened landscape, in the wake of his
Triumphal march there stealthily arose
A Something whose invisibility
Proclaimed its presence most, whose nothingness
Was its substantial horror. On it came,
Obscuring the horizon, limiting

The Hill of Visions

65

The range of earthly vision. One by one
The ancient landmarks vanished from their places
And mixed with indistinguishable dust.
Still on it came, and frightened History saw
Her chronicles—her treasures of fact
Blotted out word by word, and page by page,
By an insidious hand. The stars forgot
Their motion ; and the sun, an age-worn king,
In the dim mists of general decay
Burned feebly pale and slowly blackened out.
Then in the soundless, universal night,
Above lost Nature, formless, featureless
Oblivion reigned alone, and things were known
No more.

The Knights of Rhama

ENGRAVEN on gold
Of this bracelet old
Is the name of some fair Egyptian ;
And thoughts of the Past,
Like leaves by the blast,
Are raised by the simple inscription.
Ages have flown,
And her name alone
Is all of the maid unextinguished ;
And we sighingly yearn
In the past to discern
The scenes that she loved and relinquished.
But as well seek fruit
On the tree whose root
Is riddled by termites and rotten,
As wish to gaze
On scenes of the days
That are vanished and almost forgotten.

The Knights of Rhama 67

Perhaps Cleo stood
In a dreamy mood
In the halls of a Pharaoh's palace,
As the dawning of art
Was playing its part
In a tyrant's ambition and malice ;
Perhaps fluttering tame
The ibises came
At the call of the dark-eyed beauty,
To feed from the dish
Of silvery fish
That she brought as a tribute of duty ;
Or perhaps with the throng
She passed along
In the temple that mystery haunted,
As at noon of night,
In the ominous rite,
The priests of Isis chanted.

Where Thebes arose
In spite of her foes
To brighten the pages of story,
And lifted high
Her towers to the sky
To buttress her growing glory,
Now catacombs
Are the gloomy homes

68 The Knights of Rhama

Of many a brilliant legion
 Of the fair and the brave,
 Of the gay and the grave,
That peopled her sunny region.
 But the rank weeds grow,
 And the wild winds blow,
And the Imps of Ruin are ranging ;
 So the templed pride
 Of the great that died
Into trampled dust is changing.

 This trinket take
 For the maiden's sake
And keep in thy cabinet kindly,
 And turn away
 From the long-dead day,
And the faith that was trusted in blindly.
 Yet Earth retains
 Unhallowed remains
Of what made the Past so horrific,
 Which interest commands
 Such as singing sands
Of islands that gem the Pacific.
 And then there's the tale
 Of the night-tide pale—
The tale of the Glen of Ronda,

The Knights of Rhama 69

No legend old
On papyri told
Inspires more shuddering wonder.

When the moon is bright
In that glen at night,
There glitters the silver armour
Of a stately band
On their chargers grand—
The stately Knights of Rhama.
Their plumes of snow
In the breezes flow,
And they halt in ordered manner,
As a Skeleton Form
Comes wrapt in the storm
Bearing a sable banner.
With thunderous tread
It stalks to the head
Of the cavalcade of Rhama,
Then passes away
In strange array
With the Knights in silver armour.

They journey the path
Past the crumbling rath,
And their march is broken never

70 The Knights of Rhama

Though violets decayed
In the cypress shade
Depressingly scent for ever.
And an elfin wail
Follows their trail,
Now high, now low in sorrow ;
As if no relief
Can soften the grief
That lives for a dreary morrow.
Whether gay or sad,
Whether sane or mad,
No elfin tone shall enamour
The Knights from their steeds
While the Skeleton leads
The glittering band of Rhama.

A grassy mound
Swells from the ground
That once was ensanguined with slaughter ;
When the victors denied
In their strength and pride
The right of the vanquished to quarter.
There the Skeleton's hand
Points out to the band
Where mercy's commandment was broken ;
And the Knights bend low
In seeming woe,

The Knights of Rhama 71

But no wish nor word is spoken.
Through hundreds of years,
That are numbered with tears,
They have acted this mystical drama ;
And at most the wise
Can only surmise
What troubles the Knights of Rhama.

When the moon beams dim
The leader grim
The Caves of Silence approaches ;
Phosphorescence illumines
The stalactical rooms,
And nothing of life encroaches.
Oh, the Knights appear
So weirdly drear
In those Caves—those cells of a prison,
Where they must sleep
In a slumber deep
Till the moon again be risen,
When sad and staid
They'll come arrayed
In their glittering silver armour,
To march again
Through the lonely glen—
The shadowy Knights of Rhama.

72 The Knights of Rhama

Ah, friend, this tale
Has made thee pale,
And startled thy breast to a tremble ;—
But why to thee
Should it terror be
That some of the dead assemble?
Thy tenure of time
Is passing its prime,
And all thou hast felt or pretended
Must fade to the gloom
Of the cavernous tomb
As a day or a dream that is ended.
Though thy glory or shame,
Like Egypt's fame,
May live as a weed or blossom,
Thou with Children of Earth
In death as at birth
Shalt rest on thy mother's bosom.

Myrlin

A CAPTIVE bound by viewless chain,
Where Fortune leads a flaunting train,
Sad Rolin sees his moments pass
With sands that trickle in the glass ;
And memory deep his bosom sears
With baffled hopes and useless years ;
And well he knows in spite of all
That from the thoughtless tongue may fall,
The loneliest recluse will be found
Within the busiest city's bound.

Then as the sober twilight hour
Brings freshness to each drowsy flower,
And bats begin eccentric flight,
And shadows lengthen into night,
And stars appear in twinklings faint,
He dreams this dream, and sighs this plaint.

The Dream

When wandering in the vale of dreams,
'Neath fancy's magic-working beams,

I often hear a traveller tell
Of lovely isles that grandly swell
From ocean till they seem to be
The Edens of the Southern Sea.

But of those isles of gladness rare
Than Myrlin there is none more fair ;
And she in spring perpetual dressed
Exemplifies the truly blest.

Around her roll the sapphire waves
That murmur over ocean caves,
And bear upon their crested might
Reflections of celestial light,
As if they were for evermore
Interpreting some mystic lore.

'Mid fragrant shrubs and stately trees,
The sport of every passing breeze,
Her fountains gush in forceful way,
And scatter showers of glittering spray,
Which fall like diamonds to begem
Each neighbouring blossom's nodding stem ;
And keep the moss's vivid green
A stranger to a duller sheen.

And Myrlin's lakes so pure and calm
Have all that water has to charm,
Set in the scenes of happy time
That blend the lovely and sublime ;
Suggesting more than is expressed

And showing nature at her best.

And music ripples from the rills
That come from up among the hills
In courses serpentine, that show
A crystalline and reckless flow.
Now tripping down the stony way
Like children joyously at play ;
Now losing all their silver sheen
While running through the dark ravine ;
Now bursting like a rushing dream
Once more into the brightening beam ;
And ever singing, dark or bright,
In raptures of their young delight,
Till over jasper cliffs they dash,
While gems and snow commingling flash,
And rainbows glorify the mist
Which wreathes their death-bed sunbeam kissed.

Their tribute waters swell the sweep
Of rivers placid, wide, and deep,
That in majestic fulness flow
Through forests ancient long ago,
And corresponding to their tide
Appear to ever grow in pride :
Fast rolling on in giant strength,
Till ocean drinks their noble length,
And murmurs of the sullen surge
Monotonously sound their dirge.

In Myrlin's vales are odorous glades
That offer cool inviting shades ;
Where orange, myrtle, palm and vine,
Arrayed in vernal vesture shine,
And form the sweet secluded bowers
That hint of love and happy hours ;
Where always joys on life attend,
And seem but nature's only end.

There song-birds range in matchless dress,
And ever sing in sweet distress,
As if they loved, and loved so strong,
So poured their passion in their song.

A dewy welcomer of morn,
There blooms the rose without a thorn,
Bewitching with its breath the wind
That leaves no gloomy scene behind—
The wind that like a sylphid speeds
Across the daisy-spangled meads
To nooks where pensive violets hide,
And honey-suckles welcome wide
The bees that seek a plenitude
Of dainty sweetness for their food.

No ravens darken Myrlin's sky,
No serpents 'mid her roses lie,
No germs of sickness live to wreak
Their pallor on the healthy cheek,
And nature never once alarms

With shadow of a thing that harms.

Bright spirits in a joyous band
 Stray always on the silver strand
 Of ageless Myrlin, zoned and crowned
 With amaranth in Myrlin found.
 With sounding harp high swells their song,
 O'er shimmering seas it fleets along,
 Till heard by mourners far away
 A wild enchantment seems the lay
 That speaks of hope and lasting peace,
 From cankering care and woe release ;
 And says to all that wearied be,
 And with dissension disagree,
 " Renounce the things that are unblest,
 In Myrlin for you there is rest.
 No more repine, nor sadly roam,
 Come, come to Myrlin, 'tis your home.
 Come where no friends will prove untrue,
 No happy years be short and few ;
 Come where no turmoil rages bold,
 No bosoms sigh, no hearts are cold ;
 Come where no shadows overcast,
 Where sin is not, and love will last.
 Here every ill that ye endure
 Will find a comfort and a cure ;
 And mutual sympathy will make
 You better for each other's sake.

Forgetting self and base desires,
As conscience speaks and heart inspires,
O ye will learn how much your bliss
Lies in the simple proof of this :
The truest joy that one can feel
In doing good for others' weal.
O sad ones living all forlorn
Delay not till a future morn,
But haste to this inviolate isle
That warmly glows in beauty's smile,
That all your days may ever be
A circle of felicity."

O such the song the spirits sing,
And beauty floats on vocal wing
That hope's companionship may cheer
The souls so faithful and sincere,
Who battling with a thousand woes
Admit no conquerors in their foes.

No voyager shall sorrow more
When once he reaches Myrlin's shore ;
Nor in the pledge of friendship find
An evanescent thing of wind.
For one shall leave the vestal band,
And gently take him by the hand ;
And with a welcome kind impart
A gladness to his wearied heart.
Then both will walk the pleasant ways

Of fadeless flowers and cloudless days ;
 Unheeding artificial show,
 Commune with nature as they go ;
 And by experience firmly prove
 The soul of every joy is love.

The Plaint

O sweetly sounds that traveller's tale
 As music heard by moonlight pale
 When elfin bands in merry mood
 Commence their revels in the wood.
 For circummured in city bound,
 Where life is but a dreary round
 Of doubt and falsehood, wrongs and needs,
 That selfish competition breeds,
 I strive 'mid weariness and din,
 And nothing to my soul is kin.

Alas ! around me day by day
 I see things beautiful decay ;
 And in their stead applauded lies
 To claim the world's attention rise.
 I see the slave of gold oppress
 The wretched more with wretchedness ;
 And find the wronger helped by those
 Who should be his inveterate foes.

I see the thousands steeped in crime,

Blind to their shame, and wasting time,
God-given time, with few to prove
By censure stern fraternal love.

The war of creeds, the fires of hate
Seem never, never to abate,
Sustained by knaves who spare no pain
Obscuring truth where self may gain.

O God ! how hard it is to go
Where every friend conceals a foe;
Where kindly hearts are traded on
Till all their blessedness is gone ;
And few to pity, none to save,
Virtue is harassed to its grave !

O man ! with vain complacent smile
Forbear to boast thyself awhile,
Go, see how meaner creatures live,
And learn the lesson insects give !

Were mine the power to haste away,
What artifice would make me stay
Where manly deeds and words sincere
Afford the sycophant a sneer ;
And blame and insult are the lot
Of poverty that grovels not ?

But while I moralize and dream,
Life pours along its muddied stream ;
And day succeeding day departs,
But leaves no balm to breaking hearts.

The bird that lives its little age
 Within the confines of a cage,
 And pines for wood-lands wild and free
 Is but a reflex small of me.
 Companionless, its pangs are keen,
 It sees a dull unchanging scene,
 And stifled with the tainted air,
 Is dying fast and none to care.

The tower of marble tapering high
 May pierce the cavern of the sky ;
 The busy mart and noisy street
 May echo with commercial feet ;
 And underneath the laurelled arch
 May brilliant pageants proudly march ;
 But though of these are many fond,
 I sigh for something still beyond ;
 For these are only forms of art,
 And cannot entertain the heart.

Let cities then for others shine,
 But let the flowery fields be mine ;
 Let others fly to festal halls,
 Be mine the greenwood's leafy walls ;
 Let others fashion life by mode,
 But give me an untrammelled road ;
 A taste for art may be confessed,
 But nature's ways are always best.

How pleasant in the summer days,

When distant hills are wrapped in haze,
Within some forest old and green
To lie beneath a leafy screen,
Where fresh grass rustles in the ear,
And flowers on every side appear,
With singing birds, and humming bees,
And sunlight chequering through the trees,
And purling brooks that wind and turn
Down trembling avenues of fern !

The soul of pleasure's surely then
The absence of conflicting men—
The knowledge that no base decree
Will shame the true or bind the free—
No sordid business care intrude
To break the holy solitude,
Where life shows beautiful decrease,
At peace with all the world—at peace !

Oh this so speaks of Myrlin, bright
With all of beauty, hope, and light,
That were I 'mid her blissful scene,
In ecstasy of joy serene,
O soon I'd lift my heart in song ;
Uniting with the festal throng
Whose harmonies unrivalled rise
To celebrate their paradise.

O hark ! I fancy down the vale
I hear the traveller tell his tale

Myrlin

83

Still confidently, knowing well
No wishing counteracts the spell
And inspiration that remain
So vainly true, so truly vain ;
And oh ! conclusively it seems
The best of life is lived in dreams.

To a Bird in its Cage

WEAK prisoner, art thou weary of thy fate
That thou against thy bars dost blindly fling
Thyself ; then sit and droop with heavy wing
To feel the panting anguish of thy state ?
Art pining for a fond and faithful mate
Whose carol made the wild-wood echoes ring ?
Or dost thou miss the beauteous flowers of spring
With honeyed joys that once on thee did wait ?
Sad songster, cease thy grieving and thy pain,
A heart is near that pity feels for thee ;
Though mute thy sorrow, still it urges plain
And shames my coldness with its earnest plea.
No longer thus a prisoner thou'lt remain,
Go, ever sing in gladness—thou art free !

A Man

How grand is he who scorning all the force
Of base deception, avarice and lies,
Erects his soul, and mightily defies
The world's contagion and its censure coarse.
A battler with the many, his resource
Is not in sword or cannon, but in wise
And noble thoughts, in words without disguise,
And deeds that leave no shadow of remorse.
Mammon from him no flattery shall claim,
For Wrong, he shall make no apology ;
Above the attributes of rank and name
He takes his stand, though friendless that degree ;
And uncorrupted in an age of shame,
Facing his foes he dies, but still is free.

Opposite Views

"GOOD sir," said Satan to a pilgrim near,
 " Why dost thou with repugnance look on one
 Who in this life debars advice from none,
And in the next supplies most warming cheer ? "
Replied the pilgrim, " Horror most sincere
 I have of thee and all that thou hast done ;
 Than have thy friendship for a moment won,
Better to live eternally in fear."
" Most noble and benevolent am I,
 Yet where no condemnation should be known,
May varied virtues saintly souls deny."—
 And Satan spoke in melancholy tone.
He was a devil to the saintly eye,
 And never but an angel to his own.

Of the Thought is born the Word

THE tongue is witness to the character,
And they that gutter think will gutter speak
As naturally as steeds in gallop seek
To lose the torment of the pricking spur.
Men that delight their stagnant wit to stir,
To be consistent should enjoy the bleak
And tedious waste, the dung-hill and the reek
Putrescence breathes, nor ever hint demur.
Men never—be they dullest of the dull,
Spurn gold for sake of some pyritic dross
As corporal adornment ; yet they null
This judgment, and its inmost virtue cross,
When from their souls they drive the beautiful,
And (worst abasement) pleasure in the loss.

Thought

BEAUTIFUL are the victories of Thought !
Like a celestial spirit it appears
In full advance of ever-coming years
To rectify the wrong and truth support.
Disproving all the things by Error taught,
It smoothenes chaos into order, clears
The film from eyes of Ignorance, and steers
The force of Matter where effect is sought.
Pleasing a taste that surfeiting defies,
Thought, to no limit or no time confined,
Exhumes the past, the future prophesies ;
And to immeasurable deeds inclined,
It steals the mysteries of the jewelled skies
To more enrich its treasury—the mind.

To a Mountain

UP from the plain in all its grandeur rude
Thy massy form springs boldly to the sky ;
And travellers tired their landmark far descry
Supreme in strength and lofty magnitude.
Though storms may lash thee in their wildest mood,
Though winds may howl and lightnings flash thee by,
Firm on thy base thou canst them all defy,
And stand alone unriven, unsubdued.
Thy grand example wakes my soul from sleep,
And bids me on the strength of self depend ;
That I, when storms of trouble round me sweep,
May brave the worst and never weakly bend ;
And so repulsing woes that coming keep,
Remain as thou, unconquered to the end.

The Wall of Sabron

A Satire

FAR back in early ages of the world,
Ere History her virgin scroll unfurled,
Ere Phaeton drove the chariot of the sun,
And Dian her first antlered trophy won,
A certain country—Sabron (such her name),
Where men aspiring first imagined fame,
Upreared a wall as simplest means to test
Which candidate deserved the honour best ;
For greybeards that in solemn council met,
With brows on business most severely set,
Had, after weighing many an embryo clause,
Agreed to this, as chief of all their laws :
“ Be it enacted and to all men known
That worth approximates to height alone ;
So he'll be greater than his fellows all
Who'll write his name the highest on a wall.
And while he writes in view of all around
Sets foot on nothing save the solid ground.”

So Sabron loyally enjoined support
To what the Fathers in their wisdom taught :
Her gladdened children kept the counsel sage,
And youth walked in the hallowed steps of age.
And now, as then, 'tis found on every hand
The best advice is good example, and
The old as beacon-lights illume life's coast
Or else as wrecks show where all hope is lost.
But Sabron dreaming of her future station
Was not remarked by busy Reputation ;
Nor was she blest by any circumstance
For seers to prophesy her great advance.

Though other states were adding to their power,
She gave no sign and drowsed the passing hour ;
But suddenly she woke and throve so fast
That all her rivals were at once outclassed ;
And thus it seemed she waited but to prove
The swiftest are not always first to move.

Good fortune breeds the worm of jealousy,
And gives a neighbour cause to disagree :
Thus Sabron's neighbours quickly showed disgust
And growing angrier, called her acts unjust ;
And through the medium of their kings they made
Imperative demands that Sabron's trade
Should yield them tribute, so should all that toil
Or nature's method won from out her soil.

Then rose her stalwart sons in native pride,

And to the requisitioners replied :

“ Know this, ye tyrants, who would tax our life
Whether it be in peace, or crash of strife,
We will while we have right or chance to choose
As freemen keep it or as freemen lose.”

Cowed by the proud defiance, nevermore
Those states attempted levies on her store ;
So Sabron still pursued her glorious reign,
The first of lands and every tyrant's bane.

Full ratified, the law her sages made
The early destinies of Sabron swayed ;
So all competed who had wish to stand
As leading heroes in the leading land ;
And young Ambition with aspiring soul
Saw all the world concentred in his goal.

But many giants lived in olden time
Who easily wrote their names at heights sublime ;
And as the chosen of a fateful hour
Were fitly qualified for envied power.
Yet others envy more their glory raised,
To be much envied is to be much praised.

As each triumphant o'er his rivals rose,
Applause was his till others would depose.
His greatness proved, the hero was endeared,
Honoured while living, and in death revered.
So men rejoiced that merit did prevail,
And life was pleasant as a lover's tale.

But man as man is never satisfied,
And seeking food to satiate his pride,
He dares the dread of mountain and abyss
For that, which gained, supplies no further bliss,
While time with alternating smiles and tears
Is forging links upon his chain of years.

Long ages passed, and Sabron's story lost
Its early lustre, and triumphal boast ;
The sons of Sabron tired of primal taste
Now sought new methods, and became debased ;
For wandering from simplicity, their way
From morning's glory led to evening's grey.

Wild with desire, and eager to malign
All things but those of intricate design,
For forms outlandish fast they blundered on,
Though beauty and simplicity are one.
As complex music speaks the force of art,
But simple tunings fascinate the heart.

Holding that men were palpably insane,
The women soon took up the ravelled skein,
Forsook their kitchens, met on sundry nights,
To lecture loudly on their wrongs and rights,
And claimed to have with men an equal say
In settling vexing questions of the day.

While theories were evolved and words grew warm,
Amongst the things suggested for reform
One was the means by which a man could gain

94 The Wall of Sabron

The post of pride—his right to it maintain.

Forthwith philosophers unnumbered rushed
To show how wisdom out of nothing gushed
With all the zeal that mendicants display
When likely charitables pass their way.

The public, hearing their old proverbs changed
Were prone at first to think the "wise" deranged
But after due digestion of their lore
Began to wonder where it hid before.

One young philosopher, ecstatic-eyed,
Thought fame the attribute of all that died ;
Another, younger still, then mildly rose
To say true merit was a hooky nose ;
Another juvenile thought ponderous feet
Should be the bases of a fame complete ;
And in this tenor scheme succeeded scheme,
Till all seemed worried with a fever dream.

When worse confusion raged, and sense seemed
doomed,

A charming girl the whole affair illumed
By venturing the asseveration bold,
"The true criterion of worth is gold.—
See, friends, we are not as the ancients were,
Nor do our demi-gods with theirs compare ;
For men in stature are becoming less,
And this significantly must express
That vain it is without the help of art

For them to rise and fill as great a part.
Therefore, without compunction in the least,
Let us forego the dulness of the beast.
Let dictums out of date admit their doom—
Take antique rubbish to the lumber room.
Let gold the standard of the man then be,
And half the nation will at once agree.
We women cherish love for glittering things,
Crowns, necklets, bracelets, and bejewelled rings,
Let any fool but deck himself with these
He wins our glances and is sure to please.
Let him—no matter what his form or look,
His walk like gander, or his voice like rook,
Let him who has bright gold and mind to spend
Have opportunity to hire each friend
To lift him bravely till his height seems tall,
And famous shines his name upon the wall.
Let him then strut till someone will outbid,
And buy his greatness as our hero did.
If my proposal meets with your regard,
Make it the law—in that I'll find reward ;
If pleasing not, condemn it as you will,
My own opinion shall approve it still.
Thus we'll agree to differ, so that we
May grandly differ—differing to agree."

Though many mediocre traders squirmed,
The startling innovation was confirmed ;

And all was settled for the epoch fine
When gold and glory would in union shine.

Ye sons of Adam ! heirs to Adam's shame !
Since Mother Eve the story is the same,
The devil finds for causing troubles human
His surest instrument is pretty woman.

With heart as insensific as his mind,
Forth hurried Bruno, loud and unrefined,
Who quick declared according to the plan
His firm conviction that he was the man ;
Which declaration caused surprise profound,
And whispers passed like contraband around.

Now Bruno had a very business turn,
And knowing all that sharpers have to learn,
He cared not how he blunted borrowed tools,
But reaped a harvest from the soil of fools ;
While dupes believed his plausible pretence
Was rich with essence of benevolence.

His mansion stood in healthy-breathing grounds,
But squalid hovels leaned outside the bounds ;
An emphasis that social pride begun
Impoverishes many for the one.

So will some monarch of the forest rise,
Tossing his limbs against the roofing skies,
While dwarfed and puny, in his shadow pent,
Contiguous shrubs are robbed of nutriment.

And Bruno kept for show a household train

The Wall of Sabron 97

Whose food and wages made his thrift all vain ;
Though mournfully his menials did confess,
The food was little and the wages less.

As modern huxters who, in rag-shop pent,
Close-gather cash, then sigh for parliament,
That they may air their nonsense duty free,
Obtain by cent per cent a pedigree,
And with their coat tails to the wind unfurled,
Confuse the eyes of an astonished world,
So Bruno knew Ambition's voice inspires
And tunes the little soul to great desires.

By none condemned—he was immensely pursed,
By none opposed—some trifles he disbursed,
No threatening difficulty blocked his way,
And dressed in gayest fashions of the day,
Raised by a servile few, he wrote his name,
Disowned the past, and showed the tricks of fame.

Led by his hirelings to a cushioned chair
That he might surfeit on attentions rare,
He settled in his place, and very soon
Was cosy as a grub in its cocoon.

Though 'midst the lowest of the glittering scores
For Bruno's name rose popular applause ;
For Bruno, living, might be gazed upon,
And all the giants were for ever gone.
And more than that, the latter dying poor
Were deemed unworthy to be thought of more.

98 The Wall of Sabron

So people spoke not of the mighty dead,
But cheered a wretched mannikin instead.

To weakly simulate what greatness felt,
To rule the temple where his betters knelt,
Was Bruno's duty 'mid the partial throng
That sang his praise in many a prosy song.
Such songs, ye gods ! such harmonies uncouth,
As cause a taste of onions in the mouth.

Eager to eat the fruits of opulence,
A host of wretches practised Bruno's sense.
From weaklings snatched, and begged from strong estate,
The trifles gathered till the spoil was great.
Accumulation stimulated greed,
And like a fool that sought a honeyed weed,
Each from the other something tried to gain,
And beggar begged from beggar—begged in vain.
Afraid of peering eye and thievish hand,
Each with suspicion kept his fancy fanned,
Thought every corner, every hint of noise,
Might bring a doom on all his sordid joys.
And in the method of his single aim,
Walked Bruno's way and helped in Mammon's fame.

Thus lucent Bruno in his glory beamed,
And pride inflating, flatterers round him streamed,
Till he acquired an envied, pompous state,
And won from fools the title of "the Great.

There's never fish without a scaly foe,

There's never rule but will exceptions show,
There's never cobweb but a breeze may blast,
And never secret but is known at last.

So changes come, and changes came to him
Whose glory thousands said would never dim ;
And sudden as the lightning's shooting ray
A cloud obscured the zenith of his day.

Out from the crowd that always rushed to show
To what extremes submissiveness could go,
Ambitious Rosco stung by impulse sprang,
While groans and cheers in wild discordance rang.
Impatient to possess the long desired,
He challenged Bruno for his seat admired,
And soon prepared to write upon the wall
Where each ascent was balanced with a fall ;
With diligence of one who knew complete
The greatest victory makes the worst defeat.

This Rosco to advance his private ends
Was ever ready to encounter friends ;
And all acquaintances however made
He looked upon as articles of trade :
Seizing and weighing them with practised eye
To find what want of his they could supply.

When others met misfortune, he was sure
To make their troubles of his own be cure
By luring them with succour for an hour
To mortgage every prospect to his power ;

100 The Wall of Sabron

And putting on their shoulders burdened sore
Whatever things impatiently he bore :
Dispensing tracts, advice, and doles of bread
That where he tinkered they might work instead ;
And for such dubious benefits have time
To learn how criminals atone for crime.
And as a tiger, tasting human blood,
Eschews all relish for a tamer food,
He, tasting profit, waited wistfully
To strike a bargain with adversity.

Assuming most superior words and airs,
He smirked a pity for their growing cares ;
And often deprecated pride and strife
In mealy talk about a future life
Where every one would have an equal right
To saturate his being with delight :
Hence this sad world should to the vale of grace
Be as a gateway and a training place.

His doctrine sounded well, yet seemed amiss —
He failed to preach by practice ; and the bliss
He wooed at heart was high in air to sail,
Himself a kite all other men its tail.

Where Bruno's name in sickly triumph shone
(A poor remembrancer of ages gone,)
With prestige purchased Rosco dared to shine,
And eagerly assayed the magic line ;
Knowing his wealth was treble the amount

The Wall of Sabron 101

Of that which Bruno did his own account.

Helped up by many a hireling's ready shove,
His name he scribbled just an inch above ;
Then turning to the crowd that surged around,
Was hailed by them of men the most renowned.

Where he so long unquestioned took the lead,
Finding himself in that sad hour of need
Deserted fast by all his former friends,
With lusty curses Bruno made amends.
He stamped and fumed, his mantle tore in twain,
Pulled out his hair, then amply cursed again ;
Pinched his nose blue, while urchins came to laugh
To scamper quickly from his threatening staff,
Which added much to Rosco's chuckling glee,
In Bruno's loss he found his dignity.

Too willingly the rabble found excuse
To sweeten praise and scarify abuse.
So Rosco smiled, and Bruno looked intense,
Distinguished both, but with a difference.
Heroes are greatest in misfortune ; then
Their latent spirit makes them more than men ;
But cowards when the danger bids them dare,
Shrink—pallid exhibitions of despair ;
And sour misfortune proves a certain test
By which a friendship may be damned or blessed.

Bruno whilst seeming in a solvent state
Had long been puffed up by a syndicate ;



102 The Wall of Sabron

And brought the coffers of his "trusty" friends
A grand succession of fat dividends.
By law protected,—law, no gaol to block it,
The sharpest picker of the public pocket,—
His trade was bribes from office-seeking elves
Who greased his fat and shrivelled up themselves.

As vultures gather for the carrion feast
Beside a sad-eyed, sick, and dying beast,
In hungry haste his creditors with bills
Begged Bruno to replenish empty tills ;
And for the luxuries of many a day
To honourably settle straight away.
But he, 'mid all the plaguey noise and rout,
Felt much inclined his state of mind to doubt ;
For seemed it like a nightmare blankly grim
That, once where fortune made his goblet brim,
He should be dunned in such a vulgar fashion
Without exciting friendship or compassion.
He found when dazzled by no gay pretence,
When beggary supplanted opulence,
When those who fawned to hear him grandly speak
Contemned him as an underling and sneak,
The character of wilful man once lost
Is like a gem into the ocean tossed ;
It swiftly sinks to soundless depths of woe,
To mix with refuse and unvalued glow.

Better to borrow tons than beg a pound

The Wall of Sabron 103

Was Bruno's logic all the long year round ;
And money-lenders that for interest yearned
Would have been satisfied were loans returned ;
But all their pressure was as vain as air
To soothe his temper or confuse his glare ;
Since paying debts when jollity is o'er
Contributes cause for sorrow—nothing more.

He knew not keeping such pretentious style
That Fortune's heart belies her flabby smile.
Far nobler 'tis to go in shabby tweed,
With sixpence in thy pocket, than to lead
The fashion dressed in broad-cloth when the last
Leaves debts unpaid and creditors aghast.

Where he so long a proud position kept
With all the arts in which he was adept,
And ridden public estimation high
As meteors ride the strata of the sky,
Bruno still struck a haughty attitude,
And boasted loud 'mid interjections rude ;
"I am not paupered yet. My acres broad
Outvalue any paltry rival's hoard ;
And a rich uncle from beyond the sea
To all his goods has made sole heir of me."
How fondly men deficient hug pretence
To bolster up their sickly consequence,
And wan consumptives sadly boast their strength,
Though braggart shortness only flatters length.

104 The Wall of Sabron

Inscrutable as fate, and dark as death,
Are things which close the vent of glory's breath.
Glory—a blossom bursting purely fair,
A cobweb glistening in the summer air,
O soon dies glory, even as in squalls
The cobweb sunders and the blossom falls.

Poor Bruno fell, and in his falling found
Soft adulation with revilement drowned ;
What he so long possessed he failed to keep,
Which failure almost made him wail and weep ;
Though the world laughs at every fool that wails,
There is no pity for the man that fails.

Time's teaching makes philosophers of all,
As aerolites by gravitation fall.
Sad Bruno in a lucky moment smiled,
And to misfortune's frown grew reconciled.
The public gardens then his home he made,
And, calmly seated in a pine tree's shade,
Appreciated ginger beer and buns,
Kept studiously unconscious of his duns,
And showed all men for benefit of some
How humble can the fallen great become.

Now by the Wall, upon a gaudy throne
Did Rosco sit to make his grandeur known ;
And grand he looked if grand could look an elf
Whose creed was prejudice, whose god was self.

Rich feasts each day he pompously enjoyed,

The Wall of Sabron 105


And setting bait for praise his time employed,
While cads around with scandal much retailed
Would cheer his heart—a charm that never failed.
Unchilled by winter, blind to Time's advance,
An aged heart delights in young romance ;
And Rosco took more than a father's care
In artless doings of the youthful fair.

Full often in a condescending mood
To please his pimps he gave out humour rude ;
And Adam's jokes, when furbished up a bit,
Sustained his reputation as a wit.
On no occasion did they fail to draw,
Sickly the jokes but loud the fool's guffaw.

Rosco's most "honoured" friends—forbear to blame,
Shoddy was never flattered into fame—
Were Pulvas a tramp who, in a zealous mood,
Peregrinated for a livelihood ;
Bemba a scribe who never stopped to think
That gutter water makes a dubious ink ;
And Salvalade a pious creature given
To mistake Hell in masquerade for Heaven.

Now Pulvas had, in his peculiar mood,
Travelled much farther than a white man should,
And, crossing lands barbaric, for sensation
Roamed into regions of imagination.

While back-fence gossips met and wondered why
He was not made into a toothsome pie,



106 The Wall of Sabron

Pulvas anticipated Eatanswill
And Slumkey's show of osculating skill.

 Applauded as he set off to explore,
He reached a mangrove-fringed and murderous shore;
Greeted the threatening tribesmen with a smile,
Their raucous lingo spoke in fluent style,
And stated that all other charms above
Their picaninnies most inspired his love.

 Then wondrous sight so sweet ! so innocent !
Astonishing beyond astonishment,
From out the hovel in unsoaped array,
From ditch and dunghill and their mud-pie play,
Each garbless mother brought her dusky brood,
Some shrinking shyly, and some worse than rude.
Then Pulvas gave in ecstasy of bliss
Each grimy cheek a long and juicy kiss.
The child released, escaped in wondering fear,
And mama grinned with mouth from ear to ear ;
For which she got a handful of red beads,
And Pulvas added to his witty deeds.

 Warriors and chiefs in guttural terms approved
The bosom by such sweet emotions moved,
And rushed with tigerish eyes and "hair" on end
To then and there rub noses with their friend.

 As a fine sequel every road was clear,
And lamb-like cannibals inspired no fear ;
The traveller winked, his courtesy had won,

The Wall of Sabron 107

And well should finish work so well begun.

Now Pulvas marshalled up his baggage-train,
Bade all adieu, and hoped to meet again :
Mounted a slave's back that he might with ease
Lead his strange caravan past baobab trees.
And, passing on, a look heroic wore,
Sweet thoughts behind and glories all before.

'Twas by such means he played a winning game
Where seldom pleasant was the path to fame ;
'Twas by such means he settled in the pate
Of boobies eager to appreciate.

While he was absent on his expedition,
Report was dark with blood and superstition.
Oft cried the public heralds as they ran,
"Pulvas's party are butchered to a man."
But twelve months passing, on a morning calm
The trump of Rumour sounded an alarm ;
And swiftly from that blast exaggerated
A thousand echoes o'er the world vibrated.
"What's up?" some cried, and others answered plain,
"Pulvas the cute is coming home again.
He leaves behind him and his myrmidons
A waste land-marked with human skeletons ;
And brings as trophies of adventures bold
A hundred tons of ivory and gold.
Sure the late owners must have felt relief
At meeting with a most obliging thief

108 The Wall of Sabron

Who seeing wealth their simple lives encumber
Eased them full soon of all the precious lumber."

Pulvas, with half his homeward journey done,
Deferred enjoyment of the welcomes won ;
And in a hut historic settled down
For six months writing of a year's renown.

"The world's a stage"—a truth that Pulvas knew,
From early accidents he took his cue ;
And well he acted—adding every day
Some new sensation to his strolling play.
The limelight on in metaphoric sense,
He kept himself in splendid evidence
Each attitude he carefully devised,
Each change of programme subtly advertised
Over the Luna Mountains great was he
In every phase of comic tragedy ;
And well he chronicled each trivial fact
Sustained his part, and led in every act.

At length with bulky manuscripts he stole
Like a sage rat from out a trusty hole ;
Set sail ; and disembarking on her strand,
Was clasped to the bosom of his native land.

Greetings and speeches, banquetings and cheers,
Now ruled the day in spite of cavillers' sneers ;
And buzzing of political mosquitoes
About their straw-stuffed bills and royal vetoes.
And on the platform with much windy talk

The Wall of Sabron 109

Pulvas went over his immortal walk,
Oblivious that a million times before
Some bootless black had crossed from shore to shore,
And, dead to business-like imagining,
Had seen no merit in a common thing.

But he was in a lucky vein, and far
The world urged onward his triumphal car ;
Gave him a notoriety for life,
A hundred thousand dollars, and a wife.

Fat words he spoke still on a subject thin
Wherever men would pay ; and rivalled in
Copying first efforts as a lifelong rule,
An artist of the pup and kitten school.

Standing abuses hailed him to their crew.
(Standing abuses serve a purpose, too ;
For thumping them with metaphoric fists
Fattens the purses of cute journalists.)

Salvalade, old in scriptural research,
Stood humbly proud, a pillar of the church
Conformed in everything to "godly" plan
And had a mission to degenerate man.
Amongst the poor he solemnly was heard
Describing Heaven and happiness deferred ;
And every "Sawbath" in lugubrious state
Took pious charge of the collection plate.
To every prayer he gave a nasal twang,
Which in the "hanthem" still more nasally rang ;

110 The Wall of Sabron

And Satan himself (so said some jokers quaint)
Deemed this a merit, so approved the saint.
At tea-meetings with matron and with maid
He fixed the benches and the tables laid,
Boiled all the kettles, buttered all the scones,
Rubbed shoulders with the highly reverend dons,
And here and there rushed busiest of men,
As proud and fussy as a clocking hen.

He carried gospel tracts down dirty lanes,
And filled the heathen with remorseful pains ;
And in the light of an approved salvation,
He could be generous with discrimination.
Sure it was strange how many a starving sinner
Grew pious too with onion soup for dinner,
Though cynics thought that he who licked the bowl
To save his stomach sacrificed his soul.

As a sweet relaxation in his labours,
He dealt in money with his godless neighbours ;
In deeds of finance was a very Hector,
And banks approved the managing director.
When things "went bung" and vanished hoarded pence
There shone the justice of high Providence,
The good man's fortune only mellowed ripier,
While wretched sinners had to pay the piper.

And sneaking into "loyal institooshuns,"
He prated of religious revolutions
And "open bibles" whence his soul elate

The Wall of Sabron III

Drew inspiration of a blacker hate ;
And he concluded in his charity
All different faiths were lying bigotry.
So deemed it pleasing in the sight of God
To force the conscience with a merciless rod ;
And felt most holy in the meanest deed
When persecuting others for their creed.

With chickens of his feather hypocritizing,
Misrepresenting, taunting, scandalizing,
He did his "duty" till exasperation
Awoke the spirit of just indignation.
Soon then with lifted hands and upturned eyes
He gave expression to his meek surprise ;
And mildly said some folk ought not to live,
They *really* were so very sensitive.

He talked of battles—from which in the van
Of shrieking fugitives his fathers ran ;
He talked of loyalty—perhaps he knew
Judas was only to his falseness true ;
He talked of glory—yes, then plotted base
Till wretched servants were dismissed from place.
And this fine braggart swore by past renown
To guard the Bible and uphold the Crown.
To guard ! uphold !—Heaven spared a caitiff's son
Who would impossibilities have done.

And wearing hell-fire colours on he went,
A gloomy, sour, and treacherous malcontent,

112 The Wall of Sabron

Letting his kin of depths infernal see
His creed was outrage and a dastard he.

Bemba the scribe from science stole his fame,
His brightest glory, and her blackest shame.
He was a prototype in many ways
Of many such that "grace" these latter days,
Who buzz like blow-flies, and whose presence tells
Of filthy objects and offensive smells.

Though Progress proudly in her chariot rides,
To worse extremes obscenity she guides.
And lo ! the scribbling scavenger indites
The lurid secrets of unholy nights ;
And paints Aspasia with suggestive force,
Or shows the gangrene of some new divorce.

Drunken with gold that pours its tide to him,
While morbid plaudits on the surface swing,
And publishers for further "copy" scream
Firing to fever-heat his self-esteem,
He sieves the fulness of his bins once more
In search of tit-bits overlooked before ;
Or deeper dives in human sewers to find
Something congenial to his patrons' mind.

When 'tis condemned a host of harpies rush
To prove that all this variegated slush
Is simply "realism" ; as if by such
A name they made it cleaner to the touch.

If "realism" is thus to be excused,

The Wall of Sabron 113

Praise to putrescence cannot be refused,
So beggars may unbandage cancerous sores
To please the rich ; and fashionables in scores
May, piped by sextons, sway in dreamy waltz,
In musty precincts of sepulchral vaults ;
And soap purveyors brilliantly exert
Their wit to prove the pleasantry of dirt.

Vile are the wretches who desire the food
Which shocks the modest and incites the lewd ;
Who spend their money as they spend their time
In trampling virtue with the hoofs of crime.
Viler is he who ventures to defame
The shrine of knowledge with the spoils of shame
And stings the cheek of noble-minded men
With an inglorious and malignant pen ;
While on his pages putrefactions stink,
And every thought is blacker than the ink.

Yes, scandal valued in its every grade
Supplies the substance of a rattling trade,
And is vocation for each ferret sly,
And penny tattler of a threadbare lie.
And scandal pays ; as witness stands the Stage
Where dirt-bedraggled actors prove the rage ;
While the dress-circle unabashed a whit
Echoes the cheers of gallery and pit.

O may the Stage, pursuing worthy fame
Purge from its soul whatever tends to shame.

114 The Wall of Sabron

And as the zone that all divergence binds,
Be loved by hearts and warranted by minds
Strong to attack, and ready to defend,
Be it to mankind an inspiring friend ;
And showing things that were, the things that are,
Presaging what the future hides afar,
And lashing falsehood with its satire free,
Exist untrammelled, for all time to be
A comforter of age, a guide of youth,
A shield of virtue, and a sword of truth.

But this is of the present, and obscures
A spectral day whose potency endures ;
For Pride must drain the nauseous dose at last,
The present is the pupil of the past.

Rosco by methods as before described
The spicy juice of circumstances imbibed ;
And Flattery came to show her meek degrees
With head uncovered and elastic knees.
Perfection's acme hopeless boobies saw ;
His coat was fashion and his word was law ;
So Rosco's days to pleasure were confined,
Until with snowy locks his laurels twined.

One day was seen a youth with travelling warm,
Of giant stature and of noble form.
Unheralded, unstoried and alone,
He came unknowing all, by all unknown ;
And hurried as if seeking something dear

The Wall of Sabron 115

To which each moment brought his steps more near,
Till soon the Wall of Fame enchained his eye,
And from his breast escaped a rapturous sigh.

Entranced he stood, and seemed deprived of mind,
As one who, having from his birth been blind,
Full often heard an eulogy on light,
The soul of beauty and the death of night,
While he in vague imagination tost
Could ill define what was the sense he lost,
Till suddenly, when hope for him seemed none,
He gained his sight and saw the glorious sun.

The hoary Rosco from his glittering seat
Beheld the stranger pausing in the street ;
And instinct soon its warning tocsin sounded,
For instinct prompts where reason flies confounded.
Then anger flushed upon his wrinkled face
To see the one who would desire his place ;
With trembling rage and accents hissing low
He asked the stranger what was pain to know.

“ I am Alvanza, and I've left the shade
Where brooklets murmur past the lonely glade ;
And winds inclement that delight to freeze
Sough through the wreckage of dismantled trees.
I have no friends—with him no friends will mate
Who struggles in the cruel toils of Fate ;
Who, though his life in virtue's groove has run,
Known to be wealthless, is despised as none ;

116 The Wall of Sabron

Thus poverty, that quicksand, hides for ever
Many a noble soul and grand endeavour.

“Alone I lived and starved, and, starving, drudged
To keep the life which even Nature grudged ;
Though sometimes stray imaginings would chance
To brightly robe my future circumstance.
No passion urged against my solitude,
Or fired my soul from very birth subdued.
So joyless days unreckoned drifted by
As ashen clouds across a wintry sky :
As things of birth inanimate that pave
The path of failure to a nameless grave.

“My desolate existence seemed debarred
From every change by condemnation hard,
But one night lately when, to sorrow dead,
I slept full soundly on my rushy bed,
I heard a radiant spirit in a dream
Bid me arise, and former loss redeem
By making tarriance no longer where
The nights brought sadness and the days despair.
The spirit said : ‘Go seek the wondrous wall,
Do as the great have done, and so recall
The primal time when life was dignified
With honoured merit and with honest pride.
Arise, arise, nor harbour shade of fear
When fronting consequence of chances near.
By confidence to do great deeds are done.

The Wall of Sabron 117

Seize then all opportunities that run,
Nor wait events ; for failure there begins.
Men make events ; events make mannikins.
He who would walk the ledge projecting o'er
A gaping precipice, must think no more
Of weakness ; but continue with a tread
As if he roamed the level plain instead.
Else heart will fail, and he will surely fall,
To few a warning but a tale to all.
Have confidence in self, and so deserve
The confidence of others. 'Tis the nerve
And not the sword that wins the battle. Then
Comport thyself a man before all men
Of noble aim ; and this for ever heed,
The purpose gives the glory to the deed.
And if at times thou failest, hope not less,
It is from failure that is learned success.
Then young man brood no longer o'er thy woe,
But boldly labour for the end, and know
Though boobies gape, and sluggards tire of breath,
There is no obstacle to fame—but death.'
"The spirit finished ; and a light divine
Seemed to surround her, and upon me shine.
Then like the glamour of the day's farewell
She gently into indistinctness fell.
"Fear fled my heart, and slumber fled my eyes ;
Up from my couch I sprang in glad surprise ;

118 The Wall of Sabron

And, wide-awake, with memory's silken chain
I held my dream and dreamt it o'er again ;
With pleasure such as Avarice would feel
Could he from Mammon all his treasures steal.

“ Before the sun had glorified the East,
Or morning star its silver twinklings ceased,
Before the birds in nature's harmonies
Had sung their matins in the templed trees,
I left the forest, reached the dusty road ;
And stimulated by ambition's goad,
I marked no space, nor dalliance did allow
To chasm my hope from consummation ; now,
Behold I stand before the Wall of Fame
Where high and bright I'll celebrate my name :
Giving fulfilment to my visioned bliss,
That vanished ages may revive in this ;
That proved by trial merit may command
A station worthy of its purpose grand.
Then safe from falsehood, and the shame it brings,
The nation's helm I'll trim to nobler things.
I'll purify the laws, that in the scale
Of justice gold may never more prevail ;
That each man tranquillized in heart and mind
May deem himself the happiest of his kind ;
And while they prosper, while their joys are free,
The people's love my recompense will be.
So that in after years when cold I'll lie,

The Wall of Sabron 119

My memory-stone this legend may supply.
' His labours done, Alvanza takes his rest,
He blest himself in making others blest.'
And to his children may the sire relate
The tale of honour—how I served the state ;
And how my life, unselfish and sublime,
Example left as heritage to time,
That Justice still triumphant might confound
Her thousand foes, and range the nation round.
Perhaps to add : ' Alvanza found delight
In all that served to elevate the right,
And merit's guardian, and his country's staff,
He warred with Fate and earned his epitaph.' "

Thus spoke the stranger, and his fearless way
Changed Rosco's fury into wild dismay ;
For Rosco heard no usual flattery sung
But discords harsh of a seditious tongue ;
And much he feared his followers (who came
Inquisitively near to watch the game)
Might learn uncomfortable truths, so wane
In their allegiance to his chair and reign.
The followers, however, still kept true
To Rosco's person, and his pockets too ;
That he had gold was argument enough
For beggars not to find their dinners tough ;
And they remembered with a tranquil mind
He paid for morals scattered to the wind.

120 The Wall of Sabron

When trucklers find their conscience squeeze a bit,
A bribe soon greases it to easy fit.
Commercial sympathy did Rosco taste,
And shrewd self-interest left no chance to waste.
His humble satellites returned his pride,
Frowned when he frowned, and snuffed when he sighed.

For wit and wisdom, scorn and repartee,
In flowers of old remembrance like a bee
Did Rosco seek ; and now he faced his foe
Ready to crush him with a ponderous blow.

“Vain youth, an idle fancy led thee here
To risk a failure which the thousands fear—
To risk a failure ?—no, to surely find
A truth enforced to stay the giddy mind :
Impossibility is but the rock
That trips the fool and makes the laughing stock.

“Thy tale of youth so haunted with distress,
And late intention every man to bless,
Perhaps are true, yet sound like simple lies
Tricked out by roguery in a foolish guise.
Of course thou making such pretentious claim
Didst need excuse to mitigate the blame ;
But this defensive measure I'll subject
To fatal rule and prove its black defect :
A lie once told requires ten more to shield,
And these ten last a tenfold crop will yield ;
So from its seed malignance rises green,

And every hiding makes it plainer seen.
They that defend themselves with lies, be sure,
Use weapons to their own discomforture.

“Pomp in thy voice, and menace in thy look,
Thy thunders burst, and only folly shook.
A laughable result of grave pretence—
A man almighty in intelligence.
Who dares may contradict ; since time began
There lived no really educated man.
Increase of knowledge makes the wisest see,
All men are ignorant—differing in degree.

“Rosco am I, the favourite of renown,
And men are honoured just to touch my gown ;
For truly great, a lord without compeers,
I’ve worn the laurel over fifty years ;
And holding still the symbol of command,
My radiating glory lights the land ;
And all acknowledge merit takes the lead,
Where Rosco fails no weakling can succeed.

“Yet thou, a stranger, poor and wanting sense
Claimest what’s mine by dint of impudence,
And flimsy subterfuge of nonsense dreamt
Which mocks my person and implies contempt ;
As if I gained possession of this place
By sheer imposture and a brazen face.

“Deriding thus my consequence and fame,
Art thou devoid of reason or of shame ?

122 The Wall of Sabron

Hast thou no goodness latent in thy soul
To cool base passion and its vent control ?
Or, is thy conscience shrivelled from disuse,
Deaf to remonstrance, pauper in excuse ?
Enough ! this disquisition suits me not,
Except to amplify thy every blot ;
For be thy fault mischance, intent, or both,
To mark excuses would my ear be loth ;
Since flippant words would only aggravate,
And ignorant jarring fail to paliate.

“ Taught by experience how far to trust
The blatant ‘honest’ and the reckless just,
(A wisdom that in prickly fields is sought
Garnered in pain, yet not too dearly bought)
I know injustice is the villain’s rule,
But fear much more vagaries of the fool.
A knave’s injustice may for justice pass
When matched against the justice of an ass.

“ True to themselves, the heroes of the past
Allowed no cold formality to blast
The principle of freedom ; but they stood
Sternly as rocks that brave the ocean flood,
Rejoicing in the consciousness of might,
Uncurbed opinions, and unclouded sight.

“ They were not bondsmen of their yesterdays
(Men so unworthy that to blame’s to praise) ;
Nor did they disoblige their slightest mood

The Wall of Sabron 123

To wake posterity to gratitude.

“Now they are gone, and must we be content
To take their method as a precedent ;
To follow it as blind men do their dogs,
No matter where it wanders, how it clogs ?

“Have we a poorer breath, a meaner clay,
A readier inclination to obey
That had our sires, that we should weakly give
Our lives as tribute that their fame might live ?

“Base as the jackals slinking in the den
Of a dead lion would we be to men
Were we, suppressing every wish that fires,
In abject reverence of our mighty sires,
To immolate ourselves upon their graves ;
And bend to arbitrary custom—slaves.
It would be said, and worse be truly said,
The living are a scandal on the dead.

“O never, never shall that day be known
When such degeneration bids us groan,
While we retain the pride of long ago,
Though every moon-struck babbler in his woe
Imagines acorns falling from the oak
That, storm-defiant, fears nor chain nor yoke,
May, nursed by earth, produce unsightly weeds
To shame the nature of the tree that breeds.

“From out their sepulchre—their dust-strewn bed,
Thou spokest of reviving ages dead

124 The Wall of Sabron

With the express desire of quenching strife,
Upholding virtue, and ennobling life.
But if thou couldst do this (a mighty 'if'
Which to such ventures is a passless cliff)
It would be found those ages judged by this
Could give but an imaginary bliss ;
And robbing half the pleasures now enjoyed,
Leave only disappointments in the void.

“ To resurrect a dull, moth-eaten tale,
Musty in odour, and with mildew pale,
In hope of pleasing men into respect
For weak-kneed sentiment and stale defect,
Is at the best a sickly sort of joy,
A thankless labour, and a fool's employ.

“ Having no consonance with modern things,
A bald tradition but amusement brings ;
Threadbare and sad, it plays a vagrant part
Amid the bustling facts that fill the mart.
Nor can it be conceded on the score
Of many years it should have years the more ;
For if such theories would in practice wear
A gardener most for withered trunks might care ;
Though, to be sure, there's potency in time,
Since dint of years can sanctify a crime,
Especially if the crime has been committed
By some great 'noble' most ignoble witted.

“ As every impulse tends to some result,

Impelled to action by a force occult,
A simple antiquary may engage
To value rubbish for the sake of age ;
But to the ordered eye for things uncouth
The dust-bin has an ever open mouth.

“What dainty overeaten, pleasing lust,
But cloy the stomach with a sour disgust ;
What music that originally played
Sweetens the captive ear, when it is made
A sounding repetition, proves the food
Of nervous torture and a nuisance rude.
Thus nature censures all untamed excess,
And makes monotony its own distress.

“As flowers need sunlight for their blush and scent,
And clouds the wind for shape and government,
Man's pleasures need an ever-changing course
Lest they grow stagnant and decrease in force.
The want existing something must supply,
And with incentive such before its eye,
Genius upsprings to ban or rearrange,
So men keep busy and the fashions change.
Through all concerns of life this drift pervades,
And where it blesses most it most degrades ;
Thus in the cities highest civilized,
Wrong most is rampant, scandal least disguised ;
And Science as her apex of repute
Lifts to the gaze a highly-cultured brute.

126 The Wall of Sabron

Gasping for breath as time runs unconfined,
Asthmatic notions ever drop behind ;
And aspirants robust instead arise
To plague the foolish and confirm the wise.
Thus as each sage promulgates doctrines new
All may perceive who such a strain pursue,
What now is folly once was standard sense,
And present slang is future eloquence.

“By gradual license this our land has kept
The ordinance of change as thoughts that slept
In embryo condition, deep in time,
Sprang into vigorous and aggressive prime
To modify the stressed, the crude complete,
Or else abolish what was obsolete.

“This then accounts for systems now in force,
And such procedure shall we still endorse ;
For more occasion need we to excuse
The keeping of old nonsense bright with use.

“Our primal sires, as chroniclers proclaim,
Upreared this wall to settle men in fame ;
They held that he was worthiest of the grace
Who could his name thereon the highest trace ;
And through a round of uneventful ages
This plan won approbation from the sages.

“Then there came those who did not hesitate
To strain this definition of the great.
The new-lights held it was alone by wealth

The Wall of Sabron 127

That men were worthy, not by height nor health :
That every magnate of the money-bag,
Who did through wearisome existence drag,
Had ample right to strive for 'noble' ends
By giving shekels to his needy friends ;
Who were to shoulder up their patron then,
And let him write his greatness over men.

"Concurring with the principle advanced
(A subtle something its intent enhanced),
The shrewd and zealous public recognized
The rosy advent of a glory prized ;
And said in parlance of commercial ways
'Tis money makes the hero nowadays.'

"Thus have I warrant for the place I hold
Lasting coeval with my stock of gold ;
And thus in meek obedience to a law,
That threatens with a richly gilded claw,
Society ignores the poor and plain,
And penalizes all who such remain.

"An humble servant, I shall celebrate
A powerful ruler and his grand estate :
The mortal prince whose claim to virtues all
Obliges compliments from those in thrall,
Envied is pleased ; yet fears that which redounds
To shake his rule and circumscribe his bounds ;
For envy breeds the foe, and arms the fight,
And hawks may dare to range with eagle flight.

128 The Wall of Sabron

Thus he who holds an eminence of pride
May boast awhile, then sink undignified,
Like mountain-wind that, rushing bold and free,
Declines to nothing on the heedless sea.
This adds renown to Mammon—he depends
Not on a favour which the morrow ends ;
Nor on the circumstance or chance of things
Which shape the deeds and destinies of kings.
Above the attributes of petty place
He boasts all virtues and conceals no grace.
Though paupers whimper, while his frown they feel,
'Where grace is not, 'tis useless to conceal.'
O Mammon ! thou supreme in mightiness !
I love thy name, and thy dominion bless !
Fling out thy banners, still extend thy sway,
And build secure upon the world's decay !
 "False modesty was never mine ; my cheek
Has never reddened for a nature weak.
I'm proud of what I am—great is my store,
And Censure sits a beggar at my door.
I, being rich, of nothing can complain
So long as present laws in force remain ;
For justice by a partial hand is doled,
And he that's rich is by no law controlled,
And like a child in bed that nestles warm
And hears without the persecuting storm,
I little ponder how the outcasts fare,

The Wall of Sabron 129

But find a pleasure where they feel despair.

“The fable old I’ve heard in trusting youth
(The time when fiction reads the same as truth),
Of how a donkey donned a lion’s hide
And sported freely o’er the country-side,
Affrighting animals of timid race
Till laughing reynard brought him full disgrace.
That fable now will appositely shine,
For me the telling but the moral thine.

“I vanquished Bruno, and no man shall see
A beardless youth presume to vanquish me ;
But cynics all may sourly criticise
An ass romancing in a lion’s guise.

“Go, foolish wretch, be seen no more, nor dare
To dream of fame while wealthy men forbear,
Nor with a rushlight hasten to preside
Where glory shines and worth is dignified.
Back to thy forest, learn the difference
Between reality and wild pretence.
Pretence—a hero coming to assert ;
Reality—a pauper sprung from dirt.
Back to thy forest, and though thou mayest dream
In fits of flatulence that spirits beam ;
Men such as Rosco will not cease to be,
So wait thy doom, while critics say of thee,
‘There pines Alvanza hopelessly undone
Through seeking what the cautious always shun ;

130 The Wall of Sabron

From baffled youth he drifts to rankling age,
Chewing the cud of undigested rage.
His words, though smooth and excellently turned,
His acts revoke, and hence he, baby-learned,
Fails in success, in failure fast succeeds,
A sage in speeches, but a fool in deeds.'"

Thus Rosco spoke ; and as his toadies heard
They clapped and cheered his every uttered word.
They marked a grandeur that was all his own,
His florid periods and sonorous tone,
And base suggestions did interpolate
In style approved by modern Billingsgate.
Their Rosco shone in sense and virtue best ;
With leers they worshipped, and with oaths they blest,
And so forestalled in noise and pantomime
The modern voters at election-time
Who see in every bribe a reason clear,
And find convincing arguments in beer.

Fierce as a torrent of volcanic fire
That gains its freedom in a moment dire,
Upon Alvanza fell unweighed abuse
From tongues whose glibness spoke their frequent use :
"Begone, thou booby, with thy stupid lies !"
"Shame, villain, shame !" this, that, and other cries.

"Hold, hold, my friends," a sage exclaimed, "the yout
Should get fair play ; I think he speaks the truth."

"He gets the fairness every liar deserves

The Wall of Sabron 131

Who in presumption from his conscience swerves."

"Come, friends, his greatness is its own repute,
And your denial never can refute.

So think, for thought will justice most inspire,
To understand the man is to admire."

"We will not think, our judgment shall be brief,
For likes and dislikes fashion our belief ;
And legendary caldrons boiling o'er
Impart no relish when the broth is poor."

"Ye are not just as were the men of old
In daring such a wrong for Rosco's gold
If ye know not, oh ! may ye know in time,
To wrong the generous is a doubled crime.

"Alone Alvanza came, but with a trust
That friendship was the guerdon of the just.
He spoke his faith, and ye in turn reproved ;
Your censure threatened ere your judgment moved.
And that his purpose might be surely stemmed,
Ye wished his going and his word contemned.
To sap and succulence of moneyed joy
Ye cling, and suck, and sucking, ye destroy.
From nature's curse no sophistry redeems
The aphides of mercenary schemes.

"Though crowds salute him, and conspire to praise
With rhymed inanity and nursery phrase,
Vile is the wretch and soulless as the sod
Who bows to Mammon and renounces God.

132 The Wall of Sabron

Ungrateful, stagnant, reasonless, and vain,
He sells eternity for fleeting gain ;
Turns from high Heaven, and to his shame complete,
Worships the dust that lies beneath his feet.

“ Though Falsehood make a world-wide hecatomb
To flatter shoddy, rushing to its doom,
Gold plays a farce as honour's substitute,
And rogues' applause is censure past dispute.
But vain for me to lecture or exhort
If ye to infamy at last resort.

'Tis dreadful, dreadful, and yet sad to find
Men look on guilt with such an easy mind.
When faith is mocked and nobleness abused,
The truth is damned and justice is accused.”

Alvanza's friend with mildly kindling eye
Saw reason live, alas ! to quickly die.
He argued well, and some their friendship swore,
He argued better—they were friends no more.

“ Now, greybeard, we have had enough of this,
And all such chatter will its object miss ;
For speaking thus, thou art as false as he,
A liar's defender must another be.
Be silent, rogue, no more thy words obtrude
Until with truth their meaning is endued ;
Or, if thou dost, we will at once begin
To touch thy conscience through thy frowzy skin.”
An “ old acquaintance ” many had to own—

The deprecating look, the nasal tone,
The snaky eyes that were more green than blue,
The nose so peaky and so purple too,
The lips thin and compressed, the greasy locks
All combed and curled in fashion orthodox,
The cumbrous paunch, the hat like chimney stack,
The garments spruce of most religious black,
The flush of jewellery, the heavy cane,
The soul of cant pretending love in vain—
He was “a pious man”—one Salvalade—
Who to Alvanza these advances made.

“Dear friend, I ask thee as a brother would,
With sole intention of ensuring good,
Not to be headstrong, but in reason cease
To push thy purpose for the sake of peace :
Nor worthy less though no admirers thrill,
An unpraised violet is a violet still.
Hanker no more for what engenders strife,
Contentment is the blessedness of life.

“In glittering dreams, and phantasies that sweep
Across the brain when reason is asleep,
Thou, recking not that shadowy things deceive,
Vouchest thy faith and biddest all believe.
But in another mould my thoughts are cast,
So I’ll remain a doubter to the last.

“For dubious pleasure risk no after pain,
Nor think that hope will always bright remain

134 The Wall of Sabron

Many a little joy breeds boundless sorrow,
Many a wished 'for ever' ends before the morrow.
However dreariness surrounds the spot
Where stands thy dwelling, love, and leave it not ;
But trusting Providence retains in store
Some consolation for the worthy poor,
Congratulate thyself on what thou hast,
And let ambition from thy soul be cast.
Then—as thy friend I say it—I am sure,
Tempted to action by no glittering lure,
Thou wilt confess what many have confessed,
An humble station is a station blest."

Forth rushed the sage and resolutely bade
Alvanza from the words of Salvalade.

"Trust not the smoothened front that Falsehood wears
Nor the silk draperies that conceal her snares,
For Falsehood's honey teems with bitterness,
A poison sweet is poison not the less."

Exasperated by the meddler's tongue,
A crowd of toadies to his person hung,
And buffeted him up and down the street,
That chastisement might make his acid sweet.

(In fashion always, and a simple art,
Conviction sure we pleasantly impart
Whenever egotists our views oppose
By striking them precisely on the nose.)

Excited by participation in

The Wall of Sabron 135

The "touching conscience through a frowzy skin,"
Rosco's adherents took to boasting all,
And tumult filled a lengthened interval.
They told strange tales how they in "fistic bouts"
Discomfited some rather mythic louts ;
And each one strove the rest in pluck to lead,
And lying made up for the lacking deed ;
As rival cabmen celebrate their hacks
With much romance to sauce the puny facts.

Like hungry curs contesting for a bone,
They made all aspects of their temper known ;
And Rosco took a sinister delight,
Watching them threaten yet afraid to bite.
Their contradictions luckily deferred
Alvanza's arguments being further heard.
The case that baffled Rosco's serious stroke,
Might now fall victim to a random joke.
Ridicule oft will over sense prevail,
And laughter win where wisest reasons fail.

Patience exhausted by the wordy rout,
Alvanza paused no more like one in doubt,
"Silence !" he thundered, stamped his foot, and frowned,
And lo ! a death-like silence reigned all round.
With looks averted did the gabblers stand,
Cowed by his vigour and his bold command.

Facing the spot where Rosco weakly stood,
With lofty brow and swiftly flowing blood,

136 The Wall of Sabron

Scorn on his tongue, and lightning in his eye,
He felt his manhood and he made reply.

“Thou Rosco with thy cunningness intense
Hast in discourtesy found strong defence.
But that is correspondent to thy fame,
And point enough to make a child exclaim,
‘What sense is lost, what spirit vainly spent,
When fools mistake abuse for argument.’

“Around thee group a thousand sycophants,
Each one a hound that stands alert, and pants
To please his master, or his discourse help
With snarl, or growl, or quick approving yelp.

“It may be pleasing to thy venal pride,
Yet—acid truth—it cannot be denied,
The bigoted and brutal multitude
May hail its idol with laudation rude,
But thunders undeserved will fail to span
The simple censure of one honest man.

“Oh, had I satire, pointed and complete,
To prick the bubble of thy self-conceit,
I’d drive the stupor from thy recreant mind,
Which to its self-stagnation is so blind ;
That like an infant startled in its sleep,
Thou wouldst awaken to thyself and weep.

“Not for thy love do wretches congregate,
To make obeisance to thy chair of state ;
Not for thy glory do they volunteer

The Wall of Sabron 137

To give thee head-ache with a boisterous cheer.
Thou seemest to doubt me, but at heart must feel
The truth as piercing as a foeman's steel.

“ Ah shame on thee to stand amid them thus
Feeling no qualms of conscience at such fuss
Being made through nothing save a metal found
In depths and darkness of volcanic ground.

“ If what thou hast is valuable, and worth
The ready acclamation and the mirth
Of many, should not then its natal mine
Be countenanced profoundly as a shrine
Where every piece of quartz and every sod
May hold a portion of the public god ?

(O Gold ! full often has thy praise been sung
To many a tune by many a votary's tongue.
But oh ! the world should rue thee for all time,
Thou cause of half its work and half its crime.)

“ Thy strong contention that man's happiness
Is kept alive by change's varying dress
Has reason to a forcible degree,
So cannot well be nullified by me.

“ But yet what happiness was ever gained
By making every change that knaves ordained ?
To cast aside the balance and reverse
For sake of change, is changing for the worse.
And for the worse it sure would be if gold
Supplanted worth and dignity of old ;

138 The Wall of Sabron

And he that prospered through nefarious plan
Condemned the poorer, but the worthier man.

“Nor Rosco boast that all this pageantry
Of praise is done to favour thine and thee ;
For that is condemnation of pretence,
And shows the want of merit or of sense.
Though loud excuses has its advent nerved,
An act of *favour* never was deserved.
No man can favour one necessitous brother
Without unjustly acting towards another.
He that is favoured gets a vantage new
That someone else is more entitled to.

“So, Rosco, to thy much asserted fame
Gold is damnation, favour but a shame ;
And thou no more art to the public eye
Than gilded sepulchre or vagrant lie.

“The dull rhinoceros has no such hide
As that against which reason fails—thy pride,
His nerves are tickled by the jungle thorn,
And thine grow humorous when stung with scorn.

“Loud in presumption, garrulous and weak,
A crash of thunder, and a duckling's squeak,
And ever ready with a ‘pure’ discourse
Void of all sense, and noise its only force ;
Thus egotists self vindicated live,
Demanding praise that they would never give.
Debased and blinded with their own conceit,

The Wall of Sabron 139

Despising fools that grovel at their feet,
By them is written annals of the time,
When vice is virtue and when truth is crime ;
Forgetting depths from which they darkly rose,
Affectedness still vulgar breeding shows ;
And soaked in their own vapidness they rust,
Yet banish justice and excite distrust.
In worthless work they spend effusive zeal,
And always are—though conscience makes appeal—
In evil early and in goodness late,
In great things little, and in little great,
In merit bondsmen, masters in pretence,
Giants in folly, and but dwarfs in sense.

“The land such wretches rule is ruled for worse,
Their present falsehood being its future curse.
And as a garden once so neatly kept,
Trimmed by a hand industrious and adept,
When a dull sluggard to its charge succeeds
From blooming pride sinks to a waste of weeds,
So shall the land where honour lives no more
In wreck and scandal fallen power deplore.

“’Tis vain to say its heroes once excelled,
That dastards hold the spirit heroes held ;
’Tis vain to say that deeds of former fame
May gild with prestige an inglorious name ;
Untaught himself, the sophist thus may teach ;
But vengeful Time his doctrine shall impeach ;



140 The Wall of Sabron

And he shall learn, and learning, learn to rue
What History's proved, and still shall prove anew,
No fame can save the land from sure decay
Where knaves command and willing fools obey.

“Like serpent's fang it pains the patriot's heart
To see his country fill a shameful part ;
And heedless of the spirit that exalts
Forget her past and truckle to the false.

“All tyrant-trampled countries, mortified
With envy at her temperance and pride,
Will gladly hail her as her grandeur falls,
And leaves her in the company of thralls.
Her fame and progress deepened their distress,
For envy dogs the footsteps of success.

“Lo, when a land to villain power inclines,
Her fallen rivals mark the bodeful signs ;
And at her ruin grow unruly gay,
For harlots laugh when libertines betray.

“When here with youth's enthusiasm grown bold
Of past despair and future hope I told,
My narrative awoke the partial scorn
Of hypocrites who have thy livery worn.
Each man of many adjectives profane
Then made his skill authentically plain ;
And all in unison agreed to drown
The young ambition that desired renown.

“When 'mid the force of hostile jeers and shouts

The Wall of Sabron 141

Even my faith was entertaining doubts,
I found an honest man 'mid rogues arrayed,
A ray of sunlight in a world of shade.
To him I offer thanks, not words of art,
But gladness of an overflowing heart.
True gratitude is not by tongue confessed,
By heart 'tis felt by deeds alone expressed.
Should fortune bless me with a brighter time,
Though far from here, and in a foreign clime,
No matter what the change that then might be,
A friend still faithful shall he find in me.
O truly noble, and as truly dear,
A light to guide me, and a counsel clear,
In fond remembrance shall for ever stay
The friend who cheered me in my darkest day.

“Thou, Salvalade, with meek, affected face
Besought'st me quietly to avert disgrace,
Which, by thy words prophetic, would attend
On poor ambition to its poorer end ;
And morals were so crowded into use
As to engender but a fresh abuse.
When friends pursue thee for some good advice,
Just let them have it at its proper price.
If not, be sure that which has nothing cost
Obtains no value, so is something lost.
In spite of sense that punctuates its craze,
The dull world values only as it pays.

142 The Wall of Sabron

“For sake of sad content and slothful peace,
To crave advancement thou wouldst have me cease ;
And, fearful of the blandishments of pride,
Betray the ardent soul to suicide.

“Wouldst thou the eagle from the sky confine,
And caged in timid scruples leave him pine ?
Or, wouldst thou stay the river’s thunderous course,
And into petty brooks divert its force ?
While proud Ambition with exultant eye
Looks on the field where striving heroes die,
Shall I forget, as would an abject slave,
That merit dares for glory or the grave ?

“Let fools dream on of brilliancy undone,
By action only is the chaplet won.
Then heedless of all mawkish sentiment,
I’ll dare to gain the prize of my intent ;
And greatly too, though failure casts me down,
To nobly fail accomplishes renown.
Grander to sink with ocean still beyond,
Than shine the swimmer of a village pond.

“With thin-lipped harshness, and the trick that lies
In cunning corners of thy little eyes,
Thy smiling features glow for my defeat,
A constant smile is mask of black deceit.
While thou dost warn me from the upward way,
And darest for others’ interest to betray,
The fetish lies to which thou hast so clung

The Wall of Sabron 143

Rot in thy heart and blacken on thy tongue.

"No more address me with familiar air,
Or with seductive converse urge my care ;
I love the truth, and so bid Fortune send
An honest foe before a treacherous friend.

"Ah frown on me ye hirelings who perceive
My justice menacing your make-believe ;
And make unwelcome to the last degree
The lonely coming of my words and me.

"A pure intention and a will to do
Should gain more credit at the hand of you,
Still what physician cures by any job
The moral blindness of a thoughtless mob ?
Apart from furtherance of golden dreams
To grand reality, it somehow seems
A wasted labour doing good to those
Who though it killed thee still would be thy foes.

"Few, few have sympathy with aims that tend
To bless the future, or past failures mend.
Too oft the herald of some law to save
Lone and insulted starves into his grave ;
When late, too late, the world on ponderous stone
Admits its sin and makes his virtues known.

"They say there is no pain in death for one
Who during life no evil deeds has done ;
Though often said 'tis not as often true,
Since undone goodness dying men most rue.



144 The Wall of Sabron

Yes 'tis a different case with him who dares
To do his duty to the thought he bears,
But, dying early, leaves his method grand
Like rough-hewn marble by its quarry stand,
Unchiselled to the symmetry of scroll
That seemed perfection to his dreaming soul.
By dreams of high ambition unfulfilled,
And wasted efforts is the spirit killed.
Grand work unfinished, not the failing breath,
Makes life a loss and gives the sting to death.

“The world progresses slowly, stage by stage ;
The dreams of youth become the facts of age.
And nothing deviates in Error's night
But hails a morn of rectifying light.
Liberty too by martyrs dignified
Extends her grand dominion far and wide ;
Accredited by Knowledge who supplies
A warrant broader than the gleaming skies ;
And shows that, wedded in their destiny,
Knowledge the genius is of Liberty.

“I see majestic Knowledge stand sublime,
Diffusing glory and confounding time.
A thousand ages build her present hour,
And all futurity shall feel her power.
Earth's wisest, child-like, catch her garment's hem,
And beg her show the grander truths to them
Which by the pall of Ignorance are hidden ;

The Wall of Sabron 145

But their impatient wish is gently chidden;
For man's unfit for comprehension keen
Of dazzling treasures that are still unseen.
So slowly, surely, Knowledge doth unfold
Her secrets grand, and wondering men behold.
But to the pleading of some favourite one,
She lifts the sable screen that hides her sun,
And smiles to see him snatch a reason bright
To swell the store that gives to mortals—Light.

“As Knowledge speaks the broods of Error die—
'Tis vain ye rogues to bolster up a lie.
Ye and your works (the fungi of a day)
Rise in the shadow and in light decay.

“What is the use of waging war with Fate
Or bidding Progress stay outside the gate?
More beautiful though persecutors rage,
Stopped by no barrier, dignified with age,
Truth shall be living in resplendent prime
When dies the sun and men lose count of time.”

Stung with impatience, Rosco interposed,
“Come, imbecile, 'tis time thy lips were closed ;
For sufferance has limits—who can stay
To mark a prattler and his childish way ?
Could wind-bag verbiage and a pompous mood
Make impudence polite and evil good,
Thou truly wouldst have fortified thy case,
Compelling my vacation of this place.

146 The Wall of Sabron

But no, it could not, should not be, so thou
Hast need of schemes more advantageous now ;
Not half so high, but in a fitter strain
For strong conceit and feebleness of brain.
Cast down from soaring folly, grovelling low,
A dread to hear of, and a curse to know,
Oh, thou in thy extremity shalt find
More shame before thee than was left behind,
Not from the tongues of men shall come thy pain,
But from self-knowledge that thy fraud was vain.
Thus fraudulent ambition ever moves—
Asserting air that adamant disproves.”

“ Well this shall give thee and thy words the lie,
And with proud bearing and a flashing eye
Alvanza forward strode, and in the way
Approved of old, to Rosco's fresh dismay,
He wrote his name in equal line with those
That highest wrote since first the wall arose.
Then smiling half in triumph, half in scorn,
He turned to see what fruit his deed had borne,
And found a gaping multitude surround,
Silent as death, and stolid as the ground.
And silence at that moment loud did preach,
For silence is more eloquent than speech.

Long seemed the deep suspense, the dreadful lull,
The air condensing till the storm was full ;
Surcharged with temper, Rosco in an act

The Wall of Sabron 147

Found the expression that his language lacked.
With leer sardonic, and with eyes intent
Upon Alvanza, to his seat he bent
And raised a bag of minted gold, and shook
Its clinking fulness, that each toady's hook
Might sniff the prospects of a lean reward
For labour worthy of a rogue's regard.
Rosco had not a moment then to wait
For firebrands willing to uphold his state.

Inspired to action by the talisman,
Forward they rushed, each striving for the van,
And gathering mud and garbage from the street
Excelled themselves in many a pelting feat,
With the result that young Alvanza's name
Was left bespattered as a thing of shame,
And all the witness of a deed was gone
That lately baffled and that lately shone.

Loud Rosco laughed, and joining in his mirth
His henchmen laughed for all their pay was worth ;
And many tried to make a further hit
With ribaldry that masquerades as wit.
To Rosco's taunt a thousand echoes swelled,
And Rosco's sneer a thousand more compelled ;
All, all rejoiced, a miracle was done,
A flaring candle had eclipsed a sun !

So will the world its enmity assure
To those great master souls of conscience pure,



148 The Wall of Sabron

Who, lacking plenteous goods, by every snob
(Proud of his status in a moneyed mob)
Are ostracised, contemned whenever named,
Their courage sneered at, and their wisdom blamed.
They go their way in life in thoughtful mood,
As pilgrims wandering through a multitude.
Loth to complain, and mighty to endure,
In business slow, but not more slow than sure.
When such men die the world knows not the cost
Of grandeur gone and souls heroic lost.

In those dark moments of adversity
Alvanza's spirit strengthened mightily ;
No self-reproach to combat self-esteem
Or dim the glory of his youthful dream ;
And like a lion at bay, he flushed to close
In a last grapple with relentless foes.

"Your worst is done ; accomplished in your spite
Ye well have demonstrated brutal might,
And blotted from publicity what gave
Signal disproof to every lying knave.
But not for ever shall your scandal stay,
To-morrow is the censor of to-day.

"When ye like bubbles, tissue things of breath
Are all exploded at the touch of Death,
Justice shall waken from her lengthened sleep,
And o'er the land imperiously shall sweep ;
Discarding falsehood, reinstating right,

The Wall of Sabron 149

As darkness flies a fugitive from light.
Your grand successors in that grander time
Shall make atonement for your present crime ;
And, free from bias, men in act and name
Shall rescue truth from mercenary blame.
So judges shall be judged, and Time shall weigh
A grain of soul against a world of clay."

Here Rosco chuckled with enjoyment keen,
As if he heard some balderdash obscene,
And, as his humorous contagion spread,
The profligate of honour gaily said :

"Thou fool, thou babbling fool, so very fond
Of flouting Fate, and trusting lies beyond,
'Tis plain, 'tis sadly plain, the world shall see
A burning moral in the life of thee.
With consequential airs thou didst attire
Thy naked poverty, but strong desire
For admiration bred the evidence
Which proved my worth and thy incompetence.
Oh, what a change, a blessed change I hold,
That thou, who claimedst renown while lacking gold,
Art humbled to thy wretched self again,
Dejected as a rooster in the rain,
A spectacle forlorn and melancholy,
A helpless fool in bondage to his folly."

Alvanza heard, but ventured no reply
Save the defiance of a scornful eye,



150 The Wall of Sabron

And pained by Rosco's venomous rebuke
With faltering steps his sad departure took.
No maiden strewed his path with bloomy sprays,
No minstrel sought his ear with tuneful praise,
And nature seemed in league with every foe
To lead his life into worse toils of woe.

Aged while young, and but for sorrow known,
Remote from friendship, joyless and alone,
He sank, and there was not a watcher nigh
To soften death or catch his parting sigh.
Fresh summers came, the gay world knew no gloom,
And never mourner stood beside his tomb,
Though often gaily was the story told
Of Vanquished Genius and Almighty Gold.

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